

VOL. 107  
ISSN 0032-6178



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A Monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

JUNE 2002



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Cover: Swami Vivekananda's Temple at Ramakrishna Math, Belur, near Kolkata.



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

**ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED**

Vol. 107

June 2002

No. 6

## ❧ Traditional Wisdom ❧

### THE GOAL OF LIFE

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ।

If a man knows the Atman here (in this life), he attains the true goal. If he does not know It here, a great destruction awaits him. (*Kena Upaniṣad*, 2.5)

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।

अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुच्यते ॥

By realizing the Atman, which is soundless, intangible, formless, undecaying, and similarly, tasteless, eternal and odourless; realizing That which is without beginning and end, beyond the Great, and unchanging—one is freed from the jaws of death. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.3.15)

He is born in vain, who having attained the human birth, so difficult to get, does not attempt to realize God in this very life. (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 27)

The aim of human life is to realize God and remain immersed in contemplation of Him. God alone is real and everything else is false. God is one's very own, and this is the eternal relationship between God and creatures. One realizes God in proportion to the intensity of one's feeling for Him. (Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother*, p. 214)

The whole object ... is by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus. (*Teachings of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 79)

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## ∞ This Month ∞

This month's editorial, **Religion—Essentials and Non-essentials**, discusses Swami Vivekananda's views on true religion.

It is a hundred years since Swami Vivekananda gave up his body on 4 July 1902. Beginning this month we serialize a three-part research article by Ms Linda Prugh, entitled **Vivekananda: Conqueror of Death!** The first part details Swamiji's premonitions and predictions about his passing. Linda Prugh is a member of the Vedanta Society of Kansas City, Missouri, USA. She is known for her book *Josephine MacLeod and Vivekananda's Mission*, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.

**The Role of Bhāvanā in Moral and Spiritual Development** by Sri Jaideva Singh is an edited version of his article from the October 1940 issue of the now defunct *Philosophical Quarterly*.

Dr Sumita Roy, Associate Professor of English at Osmania University, studies in her article **Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi vis-a-vis Indian Renaissance** the contemporary relevance of Sri Sarada Devi's personality.

**Non-violence: A Spiritual Perspective** by Swami Prabuddhanandaji is a reflection on the different aspects of ahimsa, an important value distinguishing human beings from animals. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the author is head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco. The article is a gift from AHIMSA.

In his article **Reflections on Communal Violence in India** Swami Tyaganandaji analyses if religion is really responsible for

communal violence. The author is Assistant Minister at the Vedanta Society of Boston.

**Glimpses of Holy Lives** features inspiring glimpses from the life of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, a renowned woman saint among the sixty-three Nāyanmārs (Shaiva saints) of Tamil Nadu.

**Avadhūta Upaniṣad** is the third instalment of the translation of this Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math.

A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Siddhinathanandaji discusses in **Soar with the Swan** the two 'Indras' transformed by Sri Ramakrishna, and their precious bequest to humanity. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the erudite author has a number of books to his credit. He is presently at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kozhikode.

**I am the Indus** by Prof B N Sikdar is a first person narrative of the River Indus, giving a sweeping account of the history it was witness to. The author is a former professor of English, Presidency College, Calcutta University.

In his article **Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the Harmony of Religions**, Swami Sandarshanandaji stresses the ever-important message of harmony the Master and his disciple lived and preached. The author is from Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar.

From this month **Prabuddha Bharata—A Hundred Years Ago** appears on a full page after the editorial.



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# Religion: Essentials and Non-essentials

## EDITORIAL

Sri Ramakrishna's life is a glorious vindication of the fact that the Truth behind all religions is one and all religions are valid paths to that Truth. His prime disciple Swami Vivekananda disseminated this message of harmony of religions the world over. Swamiji never tired of asking people to *live* religion than busy themselves in frothy talk. His avowed aim was to make Vedanta understandable to even a child: 'The dry, abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work.'<sup>1</sup> Those who have studied Swamiji's *Complete Works* will know how admirably Swamiji lived up to the task. There was hardly anyone else who threw so much light and clarity on religion, separating its essentials from its non-essentials, and making it accessible to the common man.

We shall examine certain common conceptions about religion, and see how Swamiji's teachings on religion help us see things in perspective.

### Popular Notions about Religion

In the Kumbha Mela held in Allahabad last year, on a single important day nearly 20 million people had a dip in the confluence of three holy rivers—a mind-boggling feat for the organizers, which attracted the attention of everyone around the world. It is a vindication of Swami Vivekananda's pronouncement that religion is the backbone of India, that people in India are practical in religion. Besides Kumbha Mela, a bath in a holy river like the Ganges is considered in India auspicious, for

the river is believed to purge us of our mental impurities.

And there are people who are devoted to a holy book—the *Bhagavadgita* for Hindus, the Bible for Christians, the Koran for Muslims, the *Guru Granth Sahib* for Sikhs, the *Tripitaka* for Buddhists, and so on.

Undertaking vigils, fasts, visiting temples, churches and mosques are some more ways people adopt to practise religion. Making pilgrimages to holy places is yet another activity that makes one feel religious.

In most cases, however, these religious observances hardly leave any impression on our lives. People continue to be what they were: as worldly, if not more. There are the so-called devout, who would not hesitate to harm others in the name of religion, if dictated by people with vested interests. Swami Vivekananda's views on religion are as strengthening as they are conducive to a spirit of harmony. We discuss here his famous *mahāvākyas* (great utterances) on religion. These are quoted from his *Complete Works* (1.124).

### Potential Divinity

Swamiji's first *mahāvākya* is 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within ....' To those who have not given much thought to this saying, this may be another theoretical pronouncement. Not to a deep student of Swamiji's works.

What is meant by potentiality and manifestation? If you asked a school student what he would like to become when he grew up, he would probably say, 'I will become a doctor, a scientist, an engineer ...' When he finishes his college education, let us assume he becomes what he wanted to—a doctor, for example. When the doctor was still a boy in school, he

can be said to be a potential doctor. He was ignorant of medical science then. When he has secured his medical degree, the ignorance pertaining to the medical field has vanished—at least to a great extent. He is now endowed with the knowledge of medical science. That explains the concept of potential divinity in us. As long as it is potential, we are ignorant about it; in a state of manifestation, we *know* that we are divine. So potentiality implies ignorance and manifestation, knowledge. What is this ignorance due to? Our mental impurities, our attachment to things ephemeral, including our body and mind. Swamiji held the manifestation of this divinity to be the goal. How to manifest it? That takes us to Swamiji's second *mahāvākya*.

### Control of Nature

'... by controlling nature, external and internal.' Swamiji's reply to Khetri Maharaja's question 'What is life?' is significant: 'Life is an unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.'<sup>2</sup> That is, not being carried away by the life current, but struggling against it. Every problem and obstacle in our way bears witness to that. Every endeavour of ours is beset with adamant walls of difficulties, and involves struggle.

This is more true when it comes to religion—if we want true religion, that is. Struggle against external nature is something evident to us in the life of scientists, the great discoverers and inventors of the fruits of technology. Such scientists were driven by one consideration: search for truth. Bodily needs including sleep and food were but secondary to their quest. And nature reveals its secrets to such persevering ones. Internal nature refers to our own nature, our mind, its desires, propensities, prejudices, attachment, aversion—the list is long. In short, controlling internal nature implies controlling the mind. Says Swamiji: 'It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is

infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. This conquering of the inner man, understanding the secrets of the subtle workings that are within the human mind, and knowing its wonderful secrets, belong entirely to religion.'<sup>3</sup>

And he held this struggle against nature as the sign of human life, when he said '*Man is man so long as he struggles to rise above nature*' (2.65). He equated with stagnation and death a life of harmony with nature:

We hear a great deal about living in harmony with nature, of being in tune with nature. This is a mistake. This table, this pitcher, the minerals, a tree, are all in harmony with nature. Perfect harmony is there, no discord. To be in harmony with nature means stagnation, death. How did man build this house? By being in harmony with nature? No. By fighting against nature. It is the constant struggle against nature that constitutes human progress, not conformity with it. (6.35-6)

So, it is clear that controlling our inner nature in particular is the way to the manifestation our potential divinity.

### The Four Different Paths to the Goal

To continue with Swamiji's *mahāvākyas*. 'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion.' Work, worship, psychic control and philosophy refer, respectively, to the paths of selfless work (karma yoga), devotion (bhakti yoga), mind control and meditation (raja yoga), and knowledge (jnana yoga). The paths shown by all major religions of the world could be classified under one of these four groups. These four paths suit four different types of human mind: the active, the devotional, the contemplative and the discriminative. We shall have a cursory look at these four paths.

*Karma yoga* aims at detaching the will from the fruits of work. One method is to de-

tach oneself by sheer will-power, and the other is by offering the fruits of actions to God. A mind purified by detachment and self-surrender becomes a fit instrument to manifest the Atman.

In *Bhakti yoga* the aspirant tries to give a Godward turn to his impulses. Attachment to the world is transmuted into love of God. Aids to this are prayer, meditation, repetition of the divine name, and constant remembrance of the Lord. By God's grace the aspirant is endowed with His vision.

*Raja yoga* is the path of mind control, the process of turning the mind on its source by repeated practice of concentration and meditation. According to Patanjali this yoga consists of eight limbs, beginning with purificatory disciplines and ending in samadhi, absorption in the Self.

*Jnana yoga* is the path of knowledge: negating with the sharp sword of discrimination everything except the Divine Reality behind the manifest universe, including our body and mind. This path is of course not easy. Jnana yoga is certainly not book knowledge or intellectual gymnastics. The aspirant is expected to possess certain qualifications: discrimination, detachment, control of mind, and the desire for liberation. The three steps in this path are *śravaṇa* (hearing or reading about spiritual truths), *manana* (thinking deeply on what one has heard) and *nididhyāsana* (meditation of the nature of enquiry into the nature of the Atman).

One thing common to all these paths is mind discipline. It needs to be remembered, however, that all these four attitudes are present in all of us, but one predominates the other three. Though Swamiji held these four paths as independent means to manifest the divinity within, he advocated employing as many of these faculties as one can, which is what he meant by 'by one, or more, or all of these'. Swamiji's ideal of a perfect man was he in whom all these four 'elements' were equally manifest:

Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds *all* these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man. ... To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga—union. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of *all* existence. This is what is meant by Yoga. (2.388)

### Secondary Details

To continue with Swamiji's *mahāvākya*. '... and be free. This is the whole of religion.' In a nutshell, manifesting our potential divinity by controlling nature and becoming free is the whole or the essence of religion. This is in line with his definition of religion as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man' (4.358). Then what about all that we described at the beginning of this essay: pilgrimages, temples, books, and so on? Swamiji gives them their due importance: 'Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.' In other words, they are non-essentials of religion—to repeat, not the essence of religion. Not that they are not necessary. They are useful as long as they further the primary aim of religion, which is manifestation of divinity.

Unfortunately, for most people religion is only one more trapping along with their other possessions. Says Swamiji, 'There is a form of religion which is fashionable. My friend has much furniture in her parlour; it is the fashion to have a Japanese vase, so she must have one even if it costs a thousand dollars. In the same way she will have a little religion and join a church' (4.19). Religion hardly has any transforming effect in such people.

### True Test: Transformation of character

What is needed is a sincere attempt at transformation. Three natures are intertwined

in human personality: animal, human and divine. Religion should help us transcend our animal nature, become humans, transcend that too and become divine. Swamiji's another pithy statement makes this clear: 'Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and man unto God.' (5.409)

That holds a great lesson for us. Anything that whips up the animal in us, anything that makes us get at others' throats, could be anything but religion. The secondary details like temples, rituals, dogmas and creeds have such a strong hold on such people that they lose sight of real religion, which in Swamiji's words is 'being and becoming'. That would be like 'fighting over the basket and the fruits have fallen into the ditch' (4.128). If not properly understood, religion can degenerate into mere observance of externals, the non-essentials. Swamiji could not have been clearer about religion:

Be therefore spiritual first.... Religion is not talk, or doctrines or theories; nor is it sectarianism. .... Religion does not consist in erecting temples, or building churches, or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books, or in words, or in lectures, or in organisations. Religion consists in realisation. ... and such an experience is possible for every one of us, if we will only try. (4.179-80)

In other words, in the absence of conscious efforts to change oneself, purify one's mind, transform one's character, the secondary details will only make a mockery of religion. One is reminded of Sri Ramakrishna's allusion to a bath in the Ganges purifying one of all sins. The sins are perched on the branch of a tree on the bank, only to descend on the individual as soon as he is up after his bath. Says Sri Ramakrishna, 'Suppose a man becomes pure by chanting the holy name of God, but immediately afterwards commits many sins. He has no strength of mind. He doesn't take a vow not to repeat his sins.'<sup>4</sup> What is required is a real desire to turn a new leaf.

If we want to be truly religious, we can-

not have a better yardstick than strength. Anything that weakens us—be they superstitions or a politics-driven herd mentality manifesting our animal nature—has no place in religion. Swamiji's words apply to all religions that exist and any that is to come in future: 'It is a man-making religion that we want. ... And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison.'<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \*

To summarize. Manifestation of our potential divinity constitutes the essence of religion. Irrespective of our religious affiliation, there are four paths to make this possible: selfless work, devotion, mind control, and reflection, discrimination and meditation. Secondary details, non-essentials, are useful to the extent they help in transformation of character, in making us change from brutes to humans to gods.

The more people study Swamiji, the more clarity and sanity there will be in religion. If you are put off by the nine volumes of his *Complete Works*, there is a wonderful paperback titled *What Religion Is—in the Words of Swami Vivekananda*. A publication of Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, the book is an excellent compilation of Swamiji's views on religion, scattered over his *Complete Works*. \*

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1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), vol. 5, pp. 104-5. [Hereafter CW, followed by volume and page numbers.]
2. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol.1, p. 281.
3. CW, 2.65.
4. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 190.
5. CW, 3.224-5.





# Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago



June 1902

## SELF-REALIZATION AND FORM

Every individual is a seeming mass of changes. His body is changing every minute; so is his mind. Is he then a mass of never ceasing change and nothing more, or, is there in him something permanent? The monistic Vedanta affirms, that beyond both the body and the mind, is the Self, which, it says, never changes.

The Self, according to the Vedanta, is the real individual and the individual that changes is only apparent. The apparent individual, which is eternally changing, is in reality the unchanging Self, but, through ignorance, forgetting his real nature and thinking himself to be changing, he finds himself to be such. It is possible for him to give up this ignorance and be established in his real nature of unchange. This is the Vedantic doctrine of Self-realization.

Forms and finites are subject to change. The Self, being beyond change, is not a form and not finite; therefore, Self-realization is equivalent to the reaching of a positive state of formless Infinity.

Man is a finite individual, because he, through ignorance, thinks himself finite. Let him think the opposite way, that he is not finite, and infinite he will be. This is the 'not this, not this' method of the Jnana Yogin, who, convinced from the very first of the apparentness of the finite individuality and the reality of the Self, breaks his connection with all forms—tearing himself off from the gross, the fine, the finest, till there remain none to limit him—by the sheer force of the conviction and the thought, 'I am He, the formless Infinite', and tries to stand alone in his infinite nature.

—Swami Swarupananda

## THE KINGDOM OF JANAKA

Once upon a time King Janaka passed the sentence of banishment upon a Brahman convict. The Brahman confessed his crime and said that he fully deserved the punishment passed upon him. 'But,' said he, 'I cannot leave your kingdom, O great king, unless I know how far it extends. Please therefore tell me how I should know the boundary of your kingdom.' This question, apparently so simple, set the king thinking. After remaining in deep contemplation for some time he softly replied, 'Your question, O good Brahman, has opened my eyes. The kingdom over which I rule, belonged to my forefathers, who claimed its ownership just as I do now. But where are they now? They have all passed away, but the kingdom remains the same. How can I say, then, that it belongs to me? With my death the kingdom will not vanish, but my sense of ownership will undoubtedly cease for ever. Regarding my body in this light, I do not see how I can call it my own. Who knows that the molecules which compose it do not consider themselves masters of it? After my death dogs and jackals will feed upon it. I thus see distinctly that the body is not my own. How can I then be the owner of things which I possess and enjoy with this body? It was out of ignorance, O good Brahman, that I ordered your exile. Mithila does not belong to me any more than the sky belongs to a particular individual of the world. Live in Mithila in perfect peace as long as you will.'

—Swami Virajananda

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# Vivekananda: Conqueror of Death!

LINDA PRUGH

## Part I: On the Eve of Departure

One hundred years ago, on 4 July 1902, Swami Vivekananda left his physical body. It seems, however, that as decades have passed, the force behind his ideas and his teachings has not for a moment diminished, but has rather grown in strength, grown in breadth, and been broadcast further and further, so that today one finds devotees of Swamiji in every corner of the globe. As he once said, 'I am a voice without a form.' So his voice has continued to carry the life-giving message of Vedanta, and today people still care immensely about every aspect of the swami's life that carried that message. More

important than a teacher is his teaching. However, it seems teachings penetrate a student's mind best when they are demonstrated in the life of the teacher. Swamiji taught how to live by living, and he taught how to die by dying. This year is the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's passing away. It seems a good time to look at some significant events connected with the last days of the great Vivekananda. We begin, however, much further back, back to the last days of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, when Narendra was still a youth, a student, a leader-in-training for his world-shaking mission.

## Prophecies and Intimations

### Ineffable Peace

It was a spring evening in 1886 at the Cossipore garden house, near Calcutta. Since the previous December, Sri Ramakrishna's disciples had been serving and nursing him, as he lay dying of cancer. Since the first of January, when the Master had blessed thirty-one devotees and given them various states of ecstasy and illumination, his chief disciple, Narendra, had been begging Sri Ramakrishna to give him the experience of the Absolute; to give him the direct experience of his identity with Brahman. Now, all of a sudden, on this evening, that experience came to him with full force. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* describes it this way:

[Narendra] was meditating, when suddenly he felt a light at the back of his head, as though a torchlight were playing there. It became more

and more brilliant, and larger and larger. Finally it seemed to burst. His mind became merged in it. What transpired then in his consciousness was beyond words, for that Absolute state is beyond description. Sometime after this realization he wrote some verses, 'The Hymn of Samadhi', which hint at the nature of that exalted state.

All was still and quiet in the room, [then] Naren [cried] out, '... where is my body?'

Word of Naren's condition was quickly given to the Master, who was seated 'in intense calm' in his upper room. 'Let him stay in that state for a while,' he replied. 'He has teased me long enough for it.'<sup>1</sup>

The *Life* continues:

When [Naren] regained full consciousness of the physical world he found himself surrounded by his anxious brother-disciples. Memory came back. He felt as though he were

bathed in ineffable peace. His heart was full to overflowing with ecstasy. He realized that the Absolute of Vedanta alone could reconcile all philosophies. When he presented himself before the Master, ... [Sri Ramakrishna told him]: 'Now then, the Mother has shown you everything. Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realization you have just had be locked up and the key shall remain with me. You have work to do. When you have finished work, the treasure box will be unlocked again; you will know everything then, as you did just now.'

And later, Sri Ramakrishna said to his other disciples:

Naren will pass away only of his own will. The moment he realizes who he is, he will refuse to stay a moment longer in the body. The time will come when he will shake the world to its foundations through the strength of his intellectual and spiritual powers. I have prayed that the Divine Mother may keep this realization of the Absolute veiled from Naren. There is much work to be done by him. But this veil is so thin, so very thin that it may give way at any time.<sup>2</sup>

Before his own death, on 16 August 1886, Sri Ramakrishna gave two behests to Narendra: to keep together his brother-disciples in a spiritual community and to spread the universal, life-giving message of Vedanta.

Vivekananda served the Master's cause for sixteen long years. His 'public life', during which he most firmly organized the monastic community that bears his Master's name, and during which he did the bulk of his teaching and became known throughout the world, can be said to consist of nine years, from 1893 to 1902. During that period he spent a total of five years in the West during two exhausting stays. During the first tour, he founded the Vedanta Society of New York in November 1894, and he left a group of devotees in London to carry on work there when he returned to India in December 1896.

### 'My Task is Done'

On 1 May 1897, having returned to India from his first tour of the West, Swamiji for-

He had taken two pebbles into his hand, and was saying how, when he was well, his mind might direct itself to this and that, or his will might seem less firm, but let the least touch of pain or illness come, let him look death in the face for a while, and 'I am as hard as that (knocking the stones together), for I *have* touched the feet of God.'

mally organized the Ramakrishna Mission for the purpose of worshipping God through service to others. That summer, on 9 July, in a letter to Mary Hale, Swamiji began indicating when he would die. In this letter he first expresses some degree of satisfaction with the work done in India, then writes: 'I feel my task is done—at most three or four years more of life are left. ... I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next.'<sup>3</sup>

One month later, on 10 August, when he was in Bareilly, he told Swami Achyutananda that he would live only five or six years more.<sup>4</sup> Two months later, Vivekananda wrote to Swami Brahmananda, saying: 'I have all along been like a hero—I want my work to be quick like lightning and firm as adamant. Similarly shall I die also.'<sup>5</sup>

One year later, on 2 August 1898, in the great Himalayan shrine of Shiva at Amarnath, Swami Vivekananda experienced the grace of Amarnath, not to die until he willed it. Sister Nivedita, who was present, later wrote about it:

[The swami] entered the cave. With a smile he knelt, first at one end of the semi-circle, then at the other. The place itself was vast, large

enough to hold a cathedral, and the great ice-Shiva in a niche of deepest shadow, seemed as if throned on its own base. A few minutes passed, and then he turned to leave the cave.

To him, the heavens had opened. He had touched the feet of Shiva. He had had to hold himself tight, he said afterwards, lest he 'should swoon away'. [He continued] 'I thought the ice-lingam was Shiva Himself ... I never enjoyed any religious place so much!'

He always said too that the grace of Amarnath had been granted to him there, not to die till he himself should give consent.<sup>6</sup>

A few weeks earlier, Vivekananda had talked about death to the Western disciples with whom he was travelling. 'He had taken two pebbles into his hand, and was saying how, when he was well, his mind might direct itself to this and that, or his will might seem less firm, but let the least touch of pain or illness come, let him look death in the face for a while, and "I am as hard as that (knocking the stones together), for I *have* touched the feet of God."<sup>7</sup>

Several weeks after visiting Amarnath, Swami Vivekananda left the party of Western disciples to return to Calcutta. It was mid-October of 1898. On his way, he stopped at Lahore and was the guest of Nagendra Nath Gupta, who later reminisced: 'At this time he had a prescience of early death. "I have three years more to live," he told me with perfect unconcern, "and the only thought that disturbs me is whether I shall be able to give effect to all my ideas within this period." He died almost exactly three years later.'<sup>8</sup>

In June 1899, Vivekananda returned to the West. He spent ten weeks in New York at Ridgely with the Leggett family, then went to California where he spent the next six months. In April 1900 he founded the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. In a talk on the *Bhagavadgita*, he told those Vedanta students: 'Stand up and die game! ... If death comes ... let it come! We are determined to die game. That is all the religion I know.'<sup>9</sup>

One remembers that all of the swami's

work was taken on not because it was his work but because it was his Master's. By the spring of 1900 he was exhausted, and a number of letters written by him at that time reflect his inner withdrawal from all activity. A knower of Atman has no ego and no desire. Without ego or desire, there can be little action. Time and time again, as one studies his life during this period, one sees the real end of his formal teaching, though he was still to give a few talks and classes in New York and two or three informal talks in Paris before returning to India in December 1900.

### 'Bonds are Breaking'

In April 1900 from Alameda, California, the swami wrote to Josephine MacLeod:

Work is always difficult; pray for me, Joe, that my works stop forever, and my whole soul be absorbed in Mother. Her works, She knows. ... The battles are lost and won. I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great deliverer. 'Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore.' ... Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless—the glamour is off life. Only the voice of the Master calling—I come Lord, I come.' ... Yes, I come. Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times—the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter peace. I leave none bound, I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me or I enter into freedom in the body, the old man is gone for ever, never to come back again! The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away; the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind. ...

Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst of power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. ... My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon everything, sweet, sweet peace ... without fear, without love, without emotion.<sup>10</sup>

The following July of 1900, in New York City, Theodore Whitmarsh was present when

Swami Vivekananda, on his way to Paris, went to say goodbye to Mr Francis H Leggett. 'He heard [the swami] say that he would not be coming back to America, adding, 'I'm going to India to die.' Then Mr Whitmarsh said to him, 'If you're going to die, you should make a will.' The swami answered: 'I have nothing to will.' Mr Whitmarsh said, 'You have your books.' Then Vivekananda said, 'If you'll make out the will, I'll sign it.'<sup>11</sup>

Then when Vivekananda went to say goodbye to Swami Abhedananda, he told him: 'Well, brother, my days are numbered. I shall live only for three or four years at the most.' Abhedananda said: 'You must not talk like that, Swamiji. You are fast recovering your health. If you stay here for some time, you will be completely restored to your former strength and vigour. Besides, we have got so much work to do. It has only begun.' Then Swamiji said to Abhedananda: 'You do not understand me, brother. I feel that I am growing very big. My self is expanding so much that at times I feel as if this body could not contain me anymore. I am about to burst. Surely this cage of flesh and blood cannot hold me for

many days more.'<sup>12</sup>

That fall, in Cairo, after touring various parts of Europe, Swami Vivekananda told Madame Emma Calve that he wanted to go back to India to be with his brother monks. Then he said to her, 'I want to go back to India to die and want to be with my brothers.' According to her memoirs, she then said to him: 'Swamiji, you cannot die. We need you.' He then told her he would die on the fourth of July.<sup>13</sup>

In the spring of 1901 in Dacca, where he had taken his mother on a pilgrimage, Swamiji startled a group of disciples by telling them: 'I shall at the most live a year more. I feel it my duty now to take my mother to the holy places of pilgrimage which she desires to visit.'<sup>14</sup> With his health failing rapidly due to diabetes and asthma, Swamiji then went to Shillong in April. During a severe attack of asthma, as Swamiji sat, gasping and hugging a pillow to his chest, he said to his attendant: 'What does it matter [if the body goes]! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years.'<sup>15</sup> He knew he had fulfilled his Master's mission.

## Final Journey

### 'Greatness in Little Things!'

In July 1899, aboard the *Golconda* on his way to the West, Swami Vivekananda had told Sister Nivedita: 'As I grow older I find that I look more and more for greatness in *little* things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears, and how he speaks to his servants. I want to find a Sir Philip Sidney greatness! Few men would remember the thirst of others, even in the moment of death.'<sup>16</sup> This ideal of love and consideration for others shows up so strikingly in Swamiji's every movement as he made his way to Death.

On 18 December 1901, Swami Vivekananda sent \$ 480 to Christine Greenstidel, a devotee in Detroit, Michigan, for her passage to India. On 4 March 1902, Swamiji wrote to

Nivedita from Varanasi, where he was staying as a guest with other monks. His letter regarded the expected arrival of Christine in India. Again, the swami's letter shows his thoughtfulness of others in spite of his failing health. He writes:

It is night now, and I can hardly sit up or write, yet still feel duty bound to write to you this letter, fearing lest it becomes my last, it may put others to trouble. ...

[Christina's] reaching India is very near. ... In case I pass away, which I would very much like to do in this City of Shiva, do you open her letters directed to me, receive the girl, and send her back home. If she has no money to go back, give her a passage—even if you have to beg. ...

Ramakrishnananda came [to Belur Math from Madras] a few weeks before I came away



A lay devotee, visiting Swami Vivekananda, felt very much affected by his obvious state of poor health. Understanding his feelings, Vivekananda said to him: 'What is the use of giving way to sorrow, my boy? This body was born, and it will die. If I have been able to instil into you all, even to a small degree, some of my ideas, then I shall know that I have not lived my life in vain!'

and the first thing he did was to lay down at my feet 400 Rs he had collected in so many years of hard work!!! ... I can scarcely suppress my tears. ... Well, if I pass away, see that 400 Rs is paid back—every rupee to him. Lord bless you and Ramakrishnananda.

I am quite satisfied with my work. To have left two true souls is beyond the ambition of the greatest.<sup>17</sup>

When he returned to Belur Math, the swami received from an American devotee a cheque for Rs 750. Immediately, he took it to Swami Brahmananda and said: 'After my passing away, Christine may want to go back to America. Then where will you get her passage? Take this money and use it for that.'<sup>18</sup>

On 16 March, Swamiji was too ill to attend the Ramakrishna birth anniversary festival. To keep visitors to a minimum, Swami Niranjanananda served as his gatekeeper, just as he had done for Sri Ramakrishna in his last days. A lay devotee, visiting Swami Vivekananda, felt very much affected by his obvious state of poor health. Understanding his feelings, Vivekananda said to him: 'What is the use of giving way to sorrow, my boy? This body was born, and it will die. If I have been able to instil into you all, even to a small degree, some of my ideas, then I shall know that I have not lived my life in vain!'<sup>19</sup>

### 'I Must Go to Make Room'

During the spring of 1902, Josephine MacLeod was in India. She later wrote about the last time she saw Swamiji. We note again his love and insightful consideration of his disciples in his final conversation with her. She writes:

I saw Swami off and on all that year [1901-02]. One day in April he said, 'I have nothing in the world. I haven't a penny to myself. I have given away everything that has ever been given to me.' I said, 'Swami, I will give you fifty dollars a month as long as you live.' He thought a minute and then he said, 'Can I live on that?' 'Yes, O yes,' I said, 'but perhaps you cannot have cream.' I gave him then two hundred dollars, but before the four months were passed he had gone.

At Belur Math one day [29 March 1902], while Sister Nivedita was distributing prizes for some athletics, I was standing in Swamiji's bedroom, at the Math, at the window, watching, and he said to me, 'I shall never see forty.' I, knowing he was thirty-nine, said to him, 'But, Swami, Buddha did not do his great work until between forty and eighty.' But he said, 'I delivered my message and I must go.' I asked, 'Why go?' and he said, 'The shadow of a big tree will not let the smaller trees grow up. I must go to make room.'<sup>20</sup>

In the same vein, Swamiji consciously withdrew himself from affairs of the Math, saying: 'How often does a man ruin his disciples by remaining always with them! When men are once trained, it is essential that their leader leave them, for without his absence they cannot develop themselves.'<sup>21</sup>

### The Glory of Freedom!

Christine Greenstidel arrived in India in April 1902, and almost immediately Swamiji sent her nearly 1000 miles away to the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati in the Himalayas. There she would be with Mrs Charlotte Sevier and the group of monastics who were publishing *Prabuddha Bharata*. Perhaps Swami Vivekananda wanted to protect Christine from hav-

ing to endure the harsh Calcutta summer heat; perhaps he thought that a great geographical distance would give her some detachment when he died. During the month or so that she was able to spend in Calcutta, she observed a great difference between the aspect the swami had shown in the West and that which appeared to be moving him in India. She wrote in her reminiscences:

‘He (Swamiji) is restless, so restless,’ some would say. But it was not the restlessness of the man who does not know what is urging him on, what it is he wants. Only too well did he understand what was actuating him. He could have explained it lucidly, logically. A great free soul, conscious of the reality of his being, of his divinity, felt himself imprisoned in a cage of flesh. The bondage of the body was torture. The lion brought from the jungle, where he roamed at will, never forgets the glory of freedom. Restlessly he paces the short distance allowed by his bars. Here was a mighty free soul caged in flesh. ... True, we are all caught in this bondage, but there is hardly a human being who knows it. We cling to our captivity.

But here before our eyes we saw one who was fully conscious, who realized the Great Freedom beyond, to whom the bondage was torture, who was ceaselessly struggling to break through. ... Without any teaching whatever, our eyes were opened. ‘I am not the body, I am not the mind.’ ‘So that is what it means,’ we thought. ‘I am beyond the body with its disabilities, beyond the mind with its limitations, for I am That, I am That.’

In 1902 I saw him at Belur, a very different Vivekananda from the one whom I had known in America. Here I saw the lion in his natural surroundings. Here it was not necessary to wear the mask of conventions, nor to conform to man-made rules. He had a serenity here which was sometimes lacking in foreign countries. He was among his own. He could be himself and it was an even greater self than we had seen before. He was surrounded by young devotees and brother-disciples, those sons of Sri Ramakrishna, who were now gathered in, after long years of wandering. Much of his work was finished. He had given his message in [the West]. In India the roar of the lion was heard

from Colombo to Almora. Through the devotion of his young English disciple [Josiah] Goodwin, his message was put into permanent [published] form. He had acquired the plot of land [at Belur] on the Ganges of which he had dreamed in America, and built a shrine for the worship of Sri Ramakrishna and a monastery which was to shelter the children of Sri Ramakrishna—his fellow disciples. He had organized teaching centres, educational institutions, orphanages, famine and flood relief. He was only thirty-nine, and he knew that his release was near. It came July 4, 1902.<sup>22</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna had foretold that when Naren knew who he really was, he would refuse to remain a moment longer in the body. Sister Nivedita wrote:

During the last year of his life, a group of his early comrades were one day talking over the old days, and the prophecy that when Noren should realise who and what he had already been, he would refuse to remain in the body, was mentioned. At this, one of them turned to him, half-laughing, ‘Do you know yet who you were, Swamiji?’ he said. ‘Yes, I know now,’ was the unexpected answer, awing them into earnestness and silence, and no one could venture at that time to question him further.<sup>23</sup>

On Buddha Purnima, in May 1902, Swamiji gave monastic vows to the last of his disciples, Swami Achalananda. This young monk had been staying at Belur Math since the fall of 1901. Once he heard Swamiji say, ‘You will see, after two hundred years people will desperately cry for a hair of Vivekananda’s.’ One day Vivekananda told Achalananda to bring flowers and put them at his feet. Then he told him to bring more flowers and put them at the feet of Swami Brahmananda. Swamiji said: ‘Remember, the Guru and the President [of the Order are one]. Henceforth, worship the President every day.’<sup>24</sup>

In May, Swami Brahmananda mentioned to Swami Sadananda that Swamiji would slip away from them, even as Sri Ramakrishna had done, for he was seeing Ramakrishna in Swamiji every day. That spring,

Swami Sadananda also had a premonition that Swamiji would not live long, because his love and his compassion for others were expanding so much, it was hard for him to control them.<sup>25</sup>

### **This Divine Love!**

Swami Sadashivananda recalled in his reminiscences:

Swamiji's health broke down completely and he [said to] Swami Shivananda, 'This is a shattered body. How long can you keep it going? And supposing this body is no more. Nivedita, Shashi (Swami Ramakrishnananda) and others will obey me. They will die in harness and can never falter in carrying out my words. They are my only hope.' In this way he would give us also hope and benedictions. ...

Whoever has seen the swami even once can testify that he has seen a man who could love and who came to teach love to the world. How many youths have renounced everything to join the order of monks only because of this divine love of the Swami! Even to this day this love compels them to sacrifice their own lives to serve others.<sup>26</sup>

In late June, one week before his passing away, Swamiji asked his disciple Swami Shuddhananda to bring him the almanac. Swamiji opened it and read a number of pages. He asked Shuddhananda to put the almanac in a certain place. He kept it in his room and was seen looking at it over the next several days. The young monk did not realize that Swamiji had now fixed the date of his departure: 4 July.<sup>27</sup>

Swami Shivananda once reminisced: 'A few days before his passing away, Swamiji declared, standing in this very courtyard of the Math, that the [spiritual] current that has been released will run unimpeded for seven or eight centuries—nobody will be able to stop it.'<sup>28</sup>

### **'What Great Love He Had for Us!'**

Swamiji had established a rule in the monastery that every day the monks would

come to the chapel at 4 am and again in the evening. Anyone who was late was to go out and beg for his food that day. Swami Bodhananda later wrote about what happened one day shortly before Swamiji's passing:

A few of us overslept ourselves, and we were late for the morning meditation. When we came to the chapel, meditation was over, and Swami Vivekananda—oh, what a great love he had for us—said, 'Why are you late?' There were three of us and we said that we had overslept. Then he said: 'You cannot have your meals here today. You have to go out and beg for your food. What have you come here for? You could have done all your sleeping and eating at home; you did not have to come here for that.' Then we went out, and all the time we were gone, as we learned later from some of the other swamis, Swamiji anxiously inquired several times: 'Where have they gone? Where will they eat?' When we came back he said, 'You know, I had to order that, because I felt that was the right thing for you to do.'

A few days before his passing away, a man came to the Math, a friend from his youth, and asked him for some money. I used to be a sort of secretary to Swami Vivekananda and kept his [small amount of] cash. And he asked me to give him two rupees ... and I said, 'Give him two rupees and there will not be much left.' He answered: 'Do you think I care for that? Give him two rupees plus a little more. In a room, if one window is open and the corresponding window is closed, there is no ventilation, so let it go by one window and it will come by the other.'<sup>29</sup>

### **'A Great Tapasya Has Come upon Me'**

In the summer of 1902, Swamiji's disciple Swami Kalyanananda was at Belur, serving him. Swamiji one day asked him to bring some ice for him. Kalyanananda walked from Calcutta carrying 40 pounds of ice. Seeing him, Swamiji blessed him and said, 'In future a time will come when you will attain the state of an illumined soul.' In late June he told him: 'Look, Kalyan. Do you know my ideal? On one side of the Math there will be a temple of Ramakrishna. There the monks will meditate

and then utilize their concentration and meditation for the good of mankind. They will serve the living gods. Serving others is akin to meditation. Utilize your concentration for the suffering of humanity.' Swami Achalananda was present. This was the last time either of them saw Swamiji, Kalyanananda going to Kankhal, where he had been working to serve sick monks in the Himalayas, and Achalananda going to Varanasi to the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service.<sup>30</sup>

Three days before Swamiji's death, while walking on the spacious lawn of the monastery with Premananda, Swamiji pointed to a spot on the bank of the Ganges and said, 'When I give up the body, cremate it there.'<sup>31</sup>

After Vivekananda's death, Swami Saradananda recalled about his last days:

Swamiji's death was most wonderful! ... Lately his spirit of renunciation had become very much intensified just as it used to be in his earlier days. At 4 am he would take everybody to the Chapel to perform *japa* and meditation and he would even say, 'My task is done, now it is for you to take over the work, look after everything, and relieve me.' Sometimes he would say, 'Death has come to my bedside, I have been through enough of work and play, let the world realize what contribution I have made, it will take quite a long time to understand that. Should I go on playing this game for ever? I have thrown away the play-things after the play.'

... a few days earlier, he had told Rakhal [Swami Brahmananda], 'This time I must do one thing or the other: either I must recoup my health through meditation ... and *japa*, and work with full vigour, or else I shall give up this shattered body.'<sup>32</sup>

Sister Nivedita later wrote about Swamiji's last days and her last meetings with him:

When June closed, ... he knew well enough that the end was near. 'I am making ready for death,' he said to one [Nivedita] who was with him on the Wednesday before he died. 'A great Tapasya and meditation has come upon me, and I am making ready for death.'

And we who did not dream that he would

'Do you know my ideal? On one side of the Math there will be a temple of Ramakrishna. There the monks will meditate and then utilize their concentration and meditation for the good of mankind. They will serve the living gods. Serving others is akin to meditation. Utilize your concentration for the suffering of humanity.'

leave us, till at least some three or four years had passed, knew nevertheless that the words were true. News of the world met but a far-away rejoinder from him at this time. Even a word of anxiety as to the scarcity of the rains, seemed almost to pass him by as in a dream. It was useless to ask him now for an opinion on the questions of the day. 'You may be right,' he said quietly, 'but I cannot enter any more into these matters. I am going down into death.' ...

Did we not remember the story of the great Nirvikalpa Samadhi of his youth, and how, when it was over, his Master had said, 'This is your mango. Look! I lock it in my box. You shall taste it once more, when your work is finished.'

'... And we may wait for that,' said the monk who told me the tale. 'We shall know when the time is near. For he will tell us that again he has tasted his mango.' ...

It would seem, indeed, that in his withdrawal from all weakness and attachment, there was one exception. ... It was on the last Sunday before the end that he said to one of his disciples, 'You know the Work is always my weak point! When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!'

On Wednesday [2 July] of the same week, the day being Ekadashi, and himself keeping the fast in all strictness, he insisted on serving the morning meal to the same disciple. Each dish as it was offered—boiled seeds of the jack-fruit, boiled potatoes, plain rice, and ice-cold milk—formed the subject of playful chat; and finally, to end the meal, he himself poured the water over the hands, and dried them with a

towel.

'It is I who should do these things for you, Swamiji! Not you, for me!' was the protest naturally offered. But his answer was startling in its solemnity—'Jesus washed the *feet* of His disciples!'

Something checked the answer 'But that was the *last* time!' as it rose to the lips, and the words remained unuttered. This was well. For here also, the last time had come.<sup>33</sup>

(to be continued)

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# The Role of *Bhāvanā* in Moral and Spiritual Development

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JAIDEVA SINGH

In our moral and religious literature, the word *bhāvanā* occurs a number of times. It is frequently used in one form or other in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali, in the *Vyāsa Bhāṣya* on the *Yoga Sūtras*, in Buddhism, in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*.

In this paper we shall examine the psychological significance of *bhāvanā* and indicate the great role it plays in our moral and spiritual development.

## *Bhāvanā*—Some Definitions

Let us now see what *bhāvanā* means. Etymologically, it means 'making (to) become'. We shall see presently that this definition is very significant. It is used in the sense of dwelling upon the mind, imagining, picturing, ideation, meditative reflection, conception, thought, idea or image. It is also used to signify emotion, devotion, steeping and infusion. Vācaspati Mīśra in his *Tattvavaiśārādī Tīkā* on the *Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya* defines *bhāvanā* as '*punaḥpunaścetasi nīveśanam*, making an idea enter the mind over and over again', which means holding and maintaining an idea in the focus of consciousness.

The question that arises is, how is a word which only means 'making (to) become' used in the sense of thought, ideation, meditation, and so on. The answer is that our great thinkers discovered that thought is creative, that if an idea is held and maintained constantly in the focus of consciousness (*punaḥpunaścetasi nīveśanam*), it is realized that one becomes what one thinks. This is the great psychological significance of *bhāvanā*. *Bhāvanā* may therefore be translated as 'creative thinking'. It goes without saying that *bhāvanā* demands con-

stant practice.

Now, were these thinkers right in saying that thought is creative? If we turn to modern psychology, we shall find that in one form or another modern psychologists also maintain the same view. Says Charles Baudouin in his *Suggestion and Auto-suggestion*: 'When I think I suffer, I do really suffer; there are no imaginary ills, if by imaginary we mean illusory. A sentiment, a passion, may be the result of a suggestion; but they are nonetheless real. Their essence is to be felt and felt they are. Therein lies their full reality. Suggestion has veritably created something, for it has given life to a self-sufficient entity.' (p. 77)

Fouillee went so far as to say that 'ideas are forces.' William James says in his *Principles of Psychology*: 'Consciousness is in its very nature impulsive. We do not have a sensation and a thought and then have to *add* something dynamic to it to get a movement' (vol. 2, p. 526). Emerson, the great American thinker, realized the creative force of thought very well when he said in his *Conduct of Life*:

[Man] thinks his fate alien because the copula (between person and event) is hidden. But the soul contains the event that shall befall it; for the event is only the actualization of its thoughts, and what we pray for is always granted. The event is the print of your form. It fits you like your skin. A man will see his character emitted in the events that seem to meet, but which exclude from and accompany him. Events expand with the character. (pp. 43, 45)

We have seen that *bhāvanā* means not only thought but also emotion. This means that our psychologists believed that a thought, in order to be fully effective and creative, must

be charged with emotion, that our whole personality must give to it its fullest allegiance. In order to become what we think, we must be completely steeped in the thought; our whole personality must consent to its undivided presence in the mind. It has been a moot point among Western psychologists whether thought by itself without the aid of emotion could be dynamic. Certain psychologists, for instance, Thorndike, have called in question the view that an idea by itself can have force. They maintain that an idea by itself is unable to achieve anything. When it seems to be working for its realization there is always an intermediary effective element. It would be useless to discuss here which view is more correct, but one thing that is perfectly clear is that an idea is more effective, works for its realization in a much better way if it has the warmth of emotion. Baudouin has clearly realized the importance of emotion when he says, 'when, for one reason or another, an idea is enveloped in a powerful emotion, there is more likelihood that this idea will be suggestively realized.' (*Suggestion and Auto-suggestion*, p. 114)

As *bhāvanā* means both thought and emotion and causal force, it alone includes all those elements that successfully bring about the realization of an idea. The concept of *bhāvanā* is therefore of great psychological significance. I do not know of any parallel concept in Western psychology that includes all the elements that *bhāvanā* does (idea + emotion + being steeped in + making become—a causal force). *Bhāvanā* may be defined as an

idea charged with emotion in which our whole personality is steeped and which makes us become what we think.

### Conditions for *Bhāvanā* to be Effective

*Bhāvanā* can work successfully when the following conditions are fulfilled: (1) Relaxation or withdrawal of attention from external objects, and freedom from the tyranny of the senses (*śama* and *dama*); (2) Collectedness, in which our whole inner life flows together and collects itself within us. Without collectedness, *bhāvanā* cannot be effective. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgītā*:

Nāsti buddhirayuktasya  
na cāyuktasya bhāvanā;  
Na cābhāvayataḥ śāntir-  
aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham. (2.66)

Śaṅkarānanda rightly explains *ayuktasya* as *asamāhita-cetasah* and Śaṅkara also explains it as *asamāhita-antaḥkaraṇasya*, which means 'of the uncontrolled'. *Na ca-ayuktasya bhāvanā*—'for the uncontrolled, *bhāvanā* is not possible.'

This statement of Sri Krishna—*na cāyuktasya bhāvanā*—also gives incidentally the psychological mechanism of *bhāvanā*, giving us a hint about how *bhāvanā* works. When the mind is collected, it is the moment of its highest attention. In such a moment, when we hold and maintain an idea in the focus of consciousness, we put our whole heart and soul into it; in such a moment, the idea sinks into the deeper consciousness, and as *bhāvanā* is a dynamic *śakti* (force), it brings about a change in our character, a transformation of our personality. It makes us become what we think. The deeper consciousness, the unconscious, is teleological; it somehow finds out means for the realization of the *bhāvanā* and often astonishes us by its wonderful sagacity. Emile Coue has given numerous examples of the mysterious working of the unconscious.

Three phases can be clearly marked in the working of *bhāvanā*. First, the maintenance of

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But *bhavana* is not simply autosuggestion. ... It is a meditative reflection charged with energy that brings out actual realization of not only the idea of health, of a modification in the body, but also of the highest ideal of the self.

the idea of the desired change in the focus of attention. Second, the work of realization that is carried on in the deeper consciousness by the dynamism of *bhāvanā*, unnoticed by ourselves. Third, the actual realization, the appearance of the desired change in our character and personality.

### *Bhāvanā* and Autosuggestion

The parallel of *bhāvanā* that I can think of in modern psychology is autosuggestion. As has been well established by modern psychologists, for autosuggestion also we require a state of relaxation and collectedness, and autosuggestion also works by means of the unconscious. The very etymology of the word suggestion, 'to bring in from underneath' (*sub*, 'under' + *gerere, gestum*, 'to carry', 'to bring in') points out its relation to the unconscious. It is well known that Coué cured a number of diseases by leading his patients to evoke in themselves ideas of health and vigour by means of autosuggestion. But *bhāvanā* is not simply autosuggestion. It is something more, and has a much deeper significance. It is a meditative reflection charged with energy that brings out actual realization of not only the idea of health, of a modification in the body, but also of the highest ideal of the self. There are layers of consciousness still deeper than the so-called unconscious, which modern psychology has not yet explored. *Bhāvanā* establishes its connection with the deepest layer of consciousness.

### Moral Development

We have briefly examined the psychological mechanism and significance of *bhāvanā*. We shall now see how *bhāvanā* can be a tool for our moral and spiritual development. Here is a very typical and telling example from the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali: *Vitarka-bādhane pratīpakṣabhāvanam* (2.33). Dr Gangānath Jha has very beautifully translated it thus: '(When these restraints and observances) are obstructed by their "counter-intents" (there

should be) pondering over the antitheses of them.' In order to eradicate undesirable thoughts, habits of mind, and emotions (killing, lying, stealing, and the like), one should meditate on their opposites (love, truth, honesty, and so on).

Many important truths of psychological and ethical significance are involved in this *sūtra*.

First, in order to be effective, *bhāvanā* must be positive, not negative. If a man ponders over the thought 'I shall not be cruel', he is allowing the idea of cruelty to enter his mind indirectly, and this is to court disaster. In the very act of saying 'I shall not be cruel' a man still thinks of cruelty; the thought of cruelty is still flickering in his mind. This negative approach will not do. Marden has rightly said in *The Miracle of Right Thought*: 'No matter how hard you work for success, if your thought is saturated with the fear of failure, it will kill your efforts, neutralize your endeavours, and make success impossible.' In order to get rid of cruelty, one should not think of it at all, not even in a negative way. One should rather dwell on the opposite virtue of kindness—imagining oneself to be engaged in practising kindness in thoughts, words and deeds. Thus can one grow into a kind man. That is the great psychological secret of the cultivation of virtues, of moral development.

Second, a positive *bhāvanā* held in the focus of consciousness ipso facto inhibits all

Alas! How many lives have been ruined ... by undisciplined imagination, due to the lack of right *bhavana*. The remedy lies in a right and healthy *bhavana* practised fervently and continuously, and in avoiding all occasions of temptation till the *bhavana* has taken effect and a new thought-habit has been set.

other presentations. This is also the view of modern psychologists. McDougall says, 'Volitional attention, like all attention, involves inhibition of all presentations other than the one held at the focus of consciousness' (*Social Psychology*, p. 244). Again, 'throughout the nervous system, with the exception possibly of those most primitive parts directly concerned in the control of the visceral organs, inhibition always has this character, appears always as the negative aspect, or complementary result, of a positive process of innervation.' (*Social Psychology*, p. 245)

Indian psychologists discovered this long ago. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, commenting on the 66th verse of the second chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*, thus explains *bhāvanā* with great psychological insight: '*Bhāvanā nīdhidhyāsānātmikā vijātiya-pratyayāntarīta-svajātiya-pratyaya-pravāharūpā*, *bhāvanā* is of the nature of meditative reflection, consisting in the continuous flow in consciousness of similar ideas and consequent inhibition of all dissimilar ideas.' Without any material change, one may easily imagine McDougall's statement cited above as the translation of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's explanation of *bhāvanā*. Thus, we must concentrate on the positive idea, not worrying about the inhibition of dissimilar ideas. The inhibition will be carried out as a matter of course; it is only a complementary result of positive *bhāvanā*.

To discuss the contribution of *bhāvanā* in greater depth. In order to get rid of a particular weakness in character, we have to dwell constantly in thought on the opposite virtue, safely leaving the result in the hands of the deeper consciousness, which knows its business full well. The drunkard drinks in spite of himself because of two reasons. First, the old thought-habit of the pleasures of drinking is deeply ingrained in his character and has not worn off as yet; it still persists. He is only intellectually convinced of the evils of drinking; he has not formed a new tendency in his charac-

ter by a continuous and fervent *bhāvanā* on sobriety. Second, when he passes by a bar, or when a friend offers him a peg, he dwells in his imagination on the pleasures of the drink, and the action occurs almost with certain fatality; the hand goes to the cup, the cup goes to the lips, and in goes the liquor before he realizes what he has done. Poor Omar Khayyam cried in the agony of his soul:

*Indeed, indeed, repentance oft before I swore  
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?  
And then and then came spring,  
and rose-in-hand  
my threadbare penitence apieces tore.*

Alas! How many lives have been ruined, how many promising young men have been morally wrecked, by undisciplined imagination, due to the lack of right *bhāvanā*. The remedy lies in a right and healthy *bhāvanā* practised fervently and continuously, and in avoiding all occasions of temptation till the *bhāvanā* has taken effect and a new thought-habit has been set.

### Spiritual Development

Just as *bhāvanā* helps us in moral development, even so it does in spiritual development. In Vedānta one finds *bhāvanā* being used as an aid to spiritual development. It is called *nīdhidhyāsana*. After having convinced himself that his body and mind are not the real Self, the aspirant fervently practises the *bhāvanā* 'so'ham, I am That'. The Ātman being his real Self, by this constant *bhāvanā* he succeeds ultimately in realizing the highest Self, the 'peace that passeth understanding'.

*Bhāvanā* is, indeed, the greatest psychological miracle; it can transform our personality and character. It deserves the closest attention of the educationist, the social reformer, the psychiatrist, the doctor, and the aspirant. It was no exaggeration when our ancient thinkers said, '*Yādṛṣi bhāvanā yasya siddhirbhavati tādṛṣi*, as is the *bhāvanā*, so is the attainment.' It is a deep psychological truth. \*

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# Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi vis-a-vis Indian Renaissance

DR SUMITA ROY

Born in a remote village but living in Calcutta, the citadel of British power at that time, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was a gentle bridge between the old and the new. Worshipped by her own husband Sri Ramakrishna as feminine power incarnate, Sarada Devi exemplified the emerging model of a wife and mother, besides being a *sangha mata*, mother to an entire order of monastics. Thus Indian renaissance has in her a resilient figure adapting itself to radical changes in the world around.

## A Unique Life of Selfless Service

Basic to this renaissance model is her outstanding one-pointed dedication to service. Living most of her life in an incredibly small room in the Dakshineswar Kali temple, she served her lord and master without any grain of discomfort or complaint. Thus, an important aspect of great relevance to us is her commitment to service without any kind of expectation. In this respect she lived through the total spectrum of qualities associated with disinterested action, and this service transcended her immediate household. While Sri Ramakrishna with his delicate health required constant care and concern, she bestowed equal care and concern on the visitors and disciples.

One can visualize the ordeal of cooking for a large number of people in a small room, at generally odd hours, with total devotion and manifest love. When this is seen in its proper context of modern aids to cooking and all the present-day amenities, one is amazed at the totality of her personality doing things in a joyous spirit and not as a duty. Holy Mother encouraged her disciples to lead a life of activ-

ity, giving up idleness.

## Education for Character and Self-reliance

She was vaguely aware of the transformations sweeping through the country during that crucial period of cultural and social upheaval. These swift alterations, she realized, affect family structure but should not be allowed to dilute the core of the value system which the family has always represented in India. For instance, she had great concern for girls getting educated. She felt that those women who, because of widowhood, were particularly under strain, should develop a spirit of self-reliance. If a family could not support them, they should try to support themselves without depending on the patronage of the patriarchal family. This ideal is now embodied in several educational institutions run by the Ramakrishna Order, inspired by her ideals.

Education for character and for sustenance, based on the viable elements of Indian tradition, is what she advocated. She is a vindication of the fact that education need not necessarily be linked to literacy. Traditional value systems assigning a particular role to women found favour with her but not irrational acceptance of all the elements.

## Her Catholic and Positive Outlook

One is struck by her catholic outlook cutting across caste and ethnic barriers—almost impossible for a person living in an ethos of caste rigidities and regimentation. Thus, Ramakrishna's ideal of positive acceptance finds in her life a live demonstration.

Holy Mother could be firm when neces-



sary, and take hard decisions even when they meant pain for some. As Swami Nirvedanandaji pointed out:

This exquisite sweetness embodied in the Holy Mother was wonderfully matched by her dignified bearing as well as her sagacious dealing with people and their affairs. The 'stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind', her quick penetrating insight into the core of any problem placed before her and her extraordinary power of passing 'large and generous judgement' on matters however new or complex, all these were no less impressive than her motherly tenderness.

A good example is her refusal to don the traditional insignia of a widow after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna. She was of course inspired by Sri Ramakrishna himself. Hence her negation of the traditional role is not a mere gesture of social revolt but is an end

posed a challenge to regressive preconceptions about Indian women stored in the populist Western readings of Oriental cultures of those days.

### Redefinition of the Role of Women

There are several implications here for the emerging feminist discourse. Her marriage to Ramakrishna without its basis on the biological is of great interest since it could mean redefinition of the traditional inimical role conceived for women in spiritual life. Woman is not a distraction weaning man away from his inward quest; on the contrary, she can be a regenerative power helping and aiding—in fact energizing—the very quest. Ramakrishna, who emphasized 'woman and gold' as perils on the path, has without any irony worshipped Sarada Devi as *sakti* incarnate. Woman is thus delinked from pervasive

Peace of mind is a singular achievement which all of us seek, consciously or otherwise. Holy Mother has given a sure key to enter this treasure house, in her own inimitable way.

product of spiritual assumptions regarding the genderlessness of the Ultimate Reality. If this sounds ponderous to those who do not believe in this, its effect on Holy Mother was to make her more self-reliant, and renounce the crippling factors of traditional roles assigned to a widow.

Another context in which this was demonstrated is the ease with which she could communicate her ideal to even Western women admirers of Ramakrishna. She could establish spontaneous rapport with such outstanding and gifted Western women as Sister Nivedita, whose own role in the Indian renaissance is significant. This is not a question of language barriers but a question of the transmission of values across cultures. She never allowed the integrity of her belief and faith to be compromised and accommodated, even in the context of women with different theological traditions. This apparently simple woman

cultural readings as a temptress. Holy Mother offers correctives to these perceptions especially in the modern context, where excesses of feminism are becoming evident.

### The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission

The practical implications of all these ideas are embodied, so to say, in the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission (Sarada Mission, for short), an order of *nuns*, with branches in India and abroad. One interesting aspect of this Mission is its total autonomy—it has its own trustees, rules and regulations, and everything else necessary for its functioning. This autonomy draws its inspiration from Swami Vivekananda himself. When he was asked what he would like women to do in the context of challenging situations, he categorically said that this should be left to women themselves to decide. No superior wisdom, he felt, need be attributed to the male. It is this respect and integ-

rity that have animated the founding of the Sarada Mission. From medical services through education to publication, Sarada Mission's activities are varied.

The Sarada Mission is certainly inspired by social orientations but it draws its strength from the primary aim of inward life. This order balances work with contemplation, and if any compromise is necessary, even work will be marginalized. Such imbalances never seem to disfigure this movement, though. The Mission is doing pioneering work in remote tribal areas such as Khonsa in Arunachal Pradesh. But the education here is grounded in the twin ideal of Ramakrishna Vedanta—service and salvation.

### Spirituality in Practice

When a disciple asked her 'What is the aim of life?' Mother answered him forthrightly: 'To realize God and to remain immersed in his contemplation.'<sup>2</sup> This may give the impression that she wanted renunciation to be the basic aim of life, disregarding the secular world, in which this contemplation has to be carried out. As she rightly put it, creation itself is a blending of the *laukika* (the secular) and the *adhyatmika* (spiritual). 'One has to take up some work,' for 'is it possible to meditate for all twenty-four hours of the day? How can the mind be kept well without any work?' she asked unambiguously.<sup>3</sup> One can call this practical spirituality. The word practical is inclusive and assigns different facets of life their proper place.

One need not consider this a pious platitude. In addition to her spiritual ministry, she had to live in a household of close relatives some of whom were, if not neurotic, at least difficult to live with: her own niece Radhu, for instance. One can hardly imagine the ordeal this imposed on her God-centredness and tranquillity. Such a context is fraught with tremendous powers of healing—a discipline in-

creasingly becoming visible. In fact, she saw the episode of her neurotic niece as a device designed by the Master to infuse commitment and compassion for suffering humanity. She narrated: 'How the Master has entangled me through Radhu! After the passing away of the Master, I did not at all relish anything in life. I became utterly indifferent to worldly things and kept on praying "What shall I achieve in remaining in this world?" Then the Master pointed out a girl ten or twelve years old and said, "Cling to her as a support. Many children seeking instruction will come to you."<sup>4</sup>

### Her Prescription for Peace

All these facets stem from the central quality of a saint—all-embracing love. Her last testament, so to say, echoes this: 'If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own!'<sup>5</sup>

Peace of mind is a singular achievement which all of us seek, consciously or otherwise. Holy Mother has given a sure key to enter this treasure house, in her own inimitable way. This is her greatest contribution to the new dawn, which Ramakrishna-Sarada-Vivekananda Vedanta has ushered in. \*

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# Non-violence: A Spiritual Perspective

SWAMI PRABUDDHANANDA

**N**on-violence or harmlessness (ahimsa) is one of the twenty-six qualities of an individual born with divine nature as described by Sri Krishna (*Bhagavadgita*, Chapter 16). Some other qualities are fearlessness, purity of heart, truthfulness, absence of greed and hatred, gentleness, forgiveness and fortitude. In this essay we shall attempt a brief perspective of non-violence.

## Jungle Law and Human Dharma

There is a Sanskrit saying which means 'life lives on life.' That is how things are, and this is very evident in the animal kingdom, where we find the survival of the fittest—one animal eating up another animal, and that ani-

came what it was—a dog.

What is the moral of this story? At the animal level, man is right. It is called animal dharma or jungle law. The jungle law is: the cat eats up the rat, and then the cat is eaten up by something else. In short, life depends on life. It is acceptable as far as the animal kingdom is concerned, but when we come to human beings the situation is different. Once upon a time in human history there was cannibalism; people used to eat people. And they found this was not an appropriate behaviour for man. So the ancient dharma prohibited this. Dharma prescribes values we should cultivate and live by. According to the jungle lifestyle, one animal survives on another. But

According to the jungle lifestyle, one animal survives on another. But when it comes to human beings, they were told, 'Your lifestyle should be ahimsa, not to hurt others. What is harmful to you, you shall not do to others.' This is the essence of ancient dharma—do not harm others.

mal being eaten up by a bigger animal. There is a story in Indian mythology about a dog that was being chased by a wolf. It approached a holy man and asked, 'What shall I do?' The holy man said, 'Well, I will use my powers and convert you into a wolf.' So he turned the dog into a wolf. Afterwards the wolf became afraid of the tiger and it went to the holy man again, who said, 'All right, I will make you a tiger.' Then afterwards the tiger was afraid of a lion. Like this the story goes on, and the dog becomes a bigger animal every time. One day in search of food it came across the holy man and said, 'I will eat you up.' So the holy man said, 'You ingrate, I helped you outgrow all your fear and now you want to eat me up! Become a dog again.' So the poor creature be-

when it comes to human beings, they were told, 'Your lifestyle should be ahimsa, not to hurt others. What is harmful to you, you shall not do to others.' This is the essence of ancient dharma: do not harm others.

## Motive More Important than the Act

There are other meanings of dharma. One meaning is that whatever sustains us is dharma. Whatever strengthens us and whatever brings integration in us, is dharma. If there is no dharma, society will break down to pieces. So it is dharma which holds society together. What is the power that integrates? It is non-violence. Violence causes disintegration, it breaks society into pieces. Ahimsa or non-violence stands for the highest degree of harm-

lessness. Mahatma Gandhi believed ahimsa to be a universal law.

Though the word ahimsa or non-violence has a negative connotation, let us examine the dictionary meaning of the word. You hurt someone with physical force. That is violence, according to the dictionary. But that is a very primitive definition. When we come to human dharma, this definition is not enough. I can hurt you through my words. I can hurt you through my thoughts. Swami Vivekananda used to say that jealousy is the worst form of injury. So ahimsa implies that one should not hurt others by thought, word or deed. Not only that, there is a positive side—you should help and love others.

Again, sometimes what appears to be violence is not really so. Think of a surgeon. He plunges his knife into the chest of a patient. This is an act of compassion. A teacher or a mother disciplines a child, and the child feels

at the physical level. Therefore, our teachers say that when you talk about violence, you should take into consideration the motive, the intention behind the act.

### **Ahimsa for our Own Health**

Vedanta teaches, 'For the health of your mind, let other people alone; do not harm them. If you hurt others, you will lose your mental health.' The great philosopher Patanjali says that the main obstructions to mental health are killing, falsehood, anger and ignorance. Ignorance ends up in misery. And when you become miserable, you inflict that misery on others too. Swami Vivekananda explains it this way. Every vicious thought will rebound. Every thought of hatred you cherish, even sitting in a cave, turns up and will one day come back to you with tremendous power, and make you suffer. If you project hatred and jealousy, they will rebound on you.

What is the rationale behind non-violence? According to Vedanta, all existence is one, the same divinity pervading the entire world. Any sense of otherness brings problems. Fear, violence, hatred—all this arises because there is a sense of otherness. The wise man beholds all beings in his Self, and the Self in all beings. For that reason he does not hate anyone.

hurt. But that discipline is necessary for the good of the child. And then there are others whose duty is to protect society, like policemen or soldiers. In the course of their work they may have to apparently hurt others. But that is not violence. Therefore the question arises: what really is violence? To answer this we have to determine first what is the motive behind the act. Motivation becomes more important than the act itself. Externally, the act may be apparently violent, but another dimension needs to be considered here: the thought or the motive behind the act. Now, first the jungle law is ruled out because it is not for human beings. Next, you add another dimension—the mental dimension. Because as human beings we live more at the mental than

No power can avert it. When once you have put them in motion, you will have to reap their fruit. Remembering this will prevent you from doing wicked things. Not that someone else will hit you, you will hit yourself.

### **Ahimsa is Not Weakness**

There are several methods to rise above violence, such as karma yoga, the path of selfless work. Karma yoga teaches us how to live and work in this world. A karma yogi is one who understands how to use non-violent resistance as the highest manifestation of power. Resisting evil is but one a step towards the manifestation of the power of non-violence. Before reaching this highest ideal, man's duty is to resist evil, even by using force, if called

for. It is not 'resist no evil.' Resist evil. But it depends on how you resist. Only when you have gained the moral strength to resist violence, will non-resistance become a virtue in you. Even Mahatma Gandhi used to say that non-violence is the weapon of the brave, weapon of the strong. He also said that violence is better than cowardice. So non-violence is not synonymous with weakness.

### Oneness of Existence

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quake, a flood, a famine, an epidemic, and the like. If we look at the big picture we may say that a lot of violence is going on everywhere: death, disease, suffering, so much pain—can we stop all that? Our teachers say that cosmic-level violence is a part of nature, a part of the divine scheme, and it goes on all the time. It is a cosmic play—Divine Mother's play. But does it mean that we are justifying in behaving like animals? No, not at all. We must take a bigger and broader view of things. A person who sees everything as a divine play can become a person of great love. First a person has to transcend animal nature, then transcend human nature too and become divine. That is Swami Vivekananda's definition of religion: raising man from the brute level to the human level to the divine level. That is our goal in life.

We must take a bigger and broader view of things. A person who sees everything as a divine play can become a person of great love. First a person has to transcend animal nature, then transcend human nature too and become divine. That is Swami Vivekananda's definition of religion: raising man from the brute level to the human level to the divine level. That is our goal in life.

in all beings. For that reason he does not hate anyone. To the seer all things have really become the Self. What delusion, what sorrow can there be for him who perceives this oneness? So the solution is oneness. By being violent, we are cutting at our own roots. And that is why we suffer. Wherever we sacrifice truth, we suffer. And the truth is we are all one. Do not break this law. Just as when we violate the laws of well-being we suffer, even so when we break the spiritual law of oneness, suffering will be inevitable—physical and mental. One thing leads to another. In view of this, violence needs to be given up.

### Attitude towards Suffering around Us

Finally, in spite of our best efforts, we see so much suffering in the world—an earth-

On the other side is the law of the jungle. Ahimsa—the great dharma of harmlessness—is midway between the two. After that, beyond all dharmas and beyond all violence and non-violence, is pure love. Then you will see the divine hand behind love, peace and the so-called violence.

Whether we like it or not, wars go on. Thousands of people are killed. How shall we look upon that? We should look at it with all sympathy, all love, seeing at the same time the divine play or the divine power behind it. So we accept that just as we accept something very pleasant. A man of God salutes the unpleasant too because he sees the divine play even in that. So this is a way of looking from different sides to get different views of this important subject of non-violence. \*



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# Reflections on Communal Violence in India

SWAMI TYAGANANDA

On March 30th of this year the South Asian Association at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) put together a forum to discuss the communal violence sparked by the recent event at Godhra in Gujarat. The purpose was to publicly condemn violence in the name of religion and to help bring the estranged communities together. Among the invitees were a PhD student from Harvard who was a native of Gujarat, and a representative each from the Muslim and the Hindu communities.

Eyebrows were raised and emotions ran high after the somewhat aggressive and accusatory speech by the Hindu representative from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) of America. His response was fuelled at least in part by an earlier presentation of what was certainly a lopsided historical narrative that largely painted Muslims as the victims and Hindus as the habitual perpetrators. When the floor was thrown open for discussion, almost all of the questions and angry comments were hurled at the VHP representative. The forum that aimed at condemning violence and promoting understanding was itself becoming too fractious. Fortunately, things did not go out of hand and the meeting ended after giving almost everyone a chance to have their say. In any case, here is a brief summary of the reflections that I offered on the occasion:

We gather here today in sadness and in prayer for the innocent victims of the recent communal flare-up in Gujarat and a few other places in India. Nearly 10,000 miles separate us from the region where the actual events took place. We have the 'numbers' of people who lost their lives or were injured, or whose homes and businesses were destroyed, and on our minds are imprinted the 'images' sup-

plied by the media. What most of us don't have are the very real and personal tragedies experienced by hundreds of families: every person who died was either a mother or father or child or wife or husband of somebody or other. We can identify with the tragedy in a better way if we realize what it might have meant to us if we had lost any of our own near and dear ones in these communal clashes. So the strong emotions, the distrust and the fear that the recent happenings have generated are perfectly understandable.

It is appropriate that all right thinking people should condemn violence inflicted on fellow human beings. But alongside condemnation, there should also be reflection. Merely condemning something or trading accusations will not solve the problem. It may only produce more anger or hatred. When we condemn anything, we express our unhappiness, or displeasure, or disagreement, with whatever has happened. But the next question should be: is there anything we can do to prevent such things from happening again? That is how reflection begins. When we begin to reflect, several issues come up.

The first thing we may realize is that violence is a global phenomenon: it is not restricted to only one country or between only two specific groups of people. So while we rightly condemn violence that occurred recently in India, we should also condemn violence that has occurred—and is occurring, even at this very moment—elsewhere in the world.

The violence in India has been described as 'communal violence', which, I think, is a fairly accurate description, because two communities were indeed involved in inflicting violence on each other. People from both the

communities have suffered and people from both the communities have caused the suffering. Endless wrangling about who suffered more and whose violence was 'spontaneous' as opposed to 'premeditated', is a sure recipe for prolonging the violence and the consequent suffering.

I am not sure, though, if 'communal violence' is synonymous with 'religious violence'. By community is meant a group of people sharing a common interest, ideology or faith. Such communities can indeed clash with one another but that doesn't necessarily mean that it is a clash between ideologies or religions. In every religion, we have teachings related to love, understanding and peace—so it is difficult to understand why those who call themselves 'religious' should indulge in hatred and actions that destroy peace.

Swami Vivekananda once said: 'In my little experience I have collected this knowledge: that in spite of all the devilry that religion is blamed with, religion is not at all in fault; no religion ever persecuted others, no religion ever burnt witches; no religion ever did any of these things. What then incited people to do these things? Politics, but never religion; and if such politics takes the name of religion, whose fault is that?' (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 4.125)

By 'politics' Vivekananda meant greed or the quest for dominance and power—or retaliation against perceived threat—that often influences individual and social reactions.

I would like to say something more about retaliation against threat. The issue of 'identity' needs to be considered. All of us will naturally and spontaneously resist any threat to our lives, because that is a direct threat to our identity as human beings. But we are not just 'human': we have several more identities besides a human identity. We have identities based on gender, culture, religion, nationality and race. Whenever any of these identities is threatened, we retaliate. To begin with, the re-

taliation is usually verbal. But if that doesn't produce the desired effect, it turns to physical violence leading to injury, death and destruction.

Whenever we feel threatened, we need to ask ourselves, 'Which identity of mine is at stake here?' In an interreligious context, such inner inquiry may produce questions like: What exactly is 'religion'? What does it mean to be 'religious'? Is it possible for me to be a faithful practitioner of my religion without indulging in violence? We may be surprised to find that it is usually possible to overcome the threat quietly, intelligently and peacefully. Disagreements there will always be, but can I find a way to express my displeasure or disagreement in a calm, balanced and respectful manner? Does my view automatically become 'right' if I can beat the daylights out of those whom I consider my enemies? Such questions must be asked and their answers explored.

Our condemnation of violence will be meaningful only if we don't indulge in violence—verbal or physical—in our own daily lives. We should be able to find other means of resolving our disputes and disagreements. A dialogue in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding will be very helpful in most situations. Let us try to find constructive, peaceful ways of resolving conflicts. A good way to begin is by making sincere efforts to listen—even if we don't agree—to what others have to say. It is a good practice to put ourselves in others' shoes and see how it feels. If we don't listen and try to understand others, what right have we to expect others to listen to us and understand us?

I believe that every religion has enough resources to help its practitioners solve all difficulties in a peaceful way. If we fail to do that, let us not put the blame on religion, our own or someone else's. Let us take the responsibility on our own shoulders and recognize our own failure. We have the power to either build or destroy our future. The choice is ours. \*

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## ❧ Glimpses of Holy Lives ❧

### Yearning Made Her God's Own

**P**aramadatta was a prosperous wholesale grain merchant in Karaikkal (presently in Tamil Nadu). His business ethics and hospitality won him many friends among business contacts.

After transacting his business with Paramadatta one day, a friend presented him with two luscious mangoes specially grown in his garden. The colour of the fruit and the unique fragrance bore testimony to their speciality. Since it would be some time before Paramadatta went home for lunch, he requested his friend to hand over the mangoes at his residence, on his way back. The friend handed over the fruit to Punitavati, Paramadatta's wife, and left.

Punitavati was a devoted wife. She was cooking food, her lips repeating Shiva's name, when she heard a knock at the door, followed by *namaḥ śivāya*, the famous Shiva mantra. There was an elderly Shivacharya (sannyasin) at the door. Punitavati greeted him with folded hands, saying *namaḥ śivāya*. The sannyasin said he was hungry and tired after a long walk, and wondered whether he could have alms. Punitavati welcomed him, gave him water to wash his feet and spread a leaf before him for food. Cooking was just half done. She served him whatever was ready. She suddenly remembered the mangoes her husband had sent, and thought a mango may partly make up for the incomplete food. She wondered whether her husband would bring some guest for lunch and might need both the mangoes. She finally resolved that service to a Shivacharya was superior to any other consideration, and placed a mango on the sannyasin's leaf. Immensely pleased with her hospitality, the sannyasin blessed her profusely and left.

Punitavati resumed the cooking. By the time it was over, her husband returned home. When he sat for his meal he got it confirmed from her that the mangoes had reached her. She served him the only mango among other items. Paramadatta immensely liked the sweet fruit and asked for the second. Punitavati was in a fix. She was taught by her mother not to displease her husband in any way. In fact she never had occasion to displease him so far. Such a situation had never arisen by God's grace. Did one arise today? Paramadatta might not have objected to the first mango being served to the sannyasin. He did not have anything against holy men. But Punitavati thought that there might still remain a sense of want in her husband.

When she was cogitating thus, her husband called her a second time. In great anxiety her panting heart went out to Lord Shiva, to be relieved of the fix. Lo! There appeared on her outstretched palms another mango! Her husband called her a third time, and she ran to him, fruit in hand. With deep gratitude to Shiva for protecting her, she placed the fruit on her husband's plate. With a single bite, Paramadatta felt here was a different fruit. It tasted like nectar, as it were. Usually, you feel the sweetness of a fruit on your tongue, but here was one whose sweetness and fragrance he could experience all over his body and mind, nay, deeper! 'Punitavati, I have never eaten such a fruit! Is this the one my friend brought?' he exclaimed.

An embodiment of purity and chastity, Punitavati told him what happened. 'Really?' he asked her. He knew of her noble descent and her sterling virtues. But getting a fruit from the Lord Himself! 'Really?' Punitavati retold the incident. He gazed at her awestruck:

'Can you get one more fruit?!' Punitavati wondered, 'What sort of test is this, my Lord?' With her eyes closed, her mind surrendered to God in utter helplessness and yearning. Lo, right before Paramadatta's eyes, there appeared a second fruit on her palm! His gaze still transfixed, Paramadatta rose from his seat. He wondered in reverence: 'She did not even articulate her prayer! The Lord responded to her mere mental supplication, just like that! How devoted must she be! Is she an ordinary lady or a divine being? How could I treat her as my wife all these days?' He trembled at his thoughts, washed his hands and was off to his shop. His mind repeatedly played back the scene for him, his cogitation continuing unabated.

Paramadatta left for another country by ship on a mercantile expedition. His business flourished. On his return, a merchant in Nagapattinam (in Tamil Nadu, again) offered him his daughter in marriage. On return from a second expedition next year, he was overjoyed to see a daughter born to him. He named her Punitavati. He went a third time on his mercantile tour. Punitavati, his first wife, was in his thoughts all the time, but with an adoration due to a divine being. On his return, he found Punitavati's father waiting for him with his relatives. He said he did not have any objection to Paramadatta's second marriage, but pleaded that he didn't desert Punitavati. 'Where is she?' asked Paramadatta. Punitavati's father replied that she was in a friend's house, and said he would fetch her there.

Paramadatta said he would visit her himself, and set out with his wife and daughter. His mind was full of thoughts of Punitavati. They reached the house. When Punitavati appeared before him, with folded hands he introduced to her his wife and daughter, and asked them to prostrate before her. He himself joined them and fell at her feet. The relatives were scandalized at this strange behaviour of a husband. Paramadatta got up and said, 'Respected elders, Punitavati is not my wife any-

more. She is not a human being; she is divine. I left her on seeing a miracle she wrought, married again in due course, and named my daughter after her. I can't think of her as wife anymore. Nor am I fit to be her husband.' He narrated the whole story. The relatives were agape in wonder, and fell at Punitavati's feet, realizing her greatness.

Punitavati closed her eyes in prayer: 'O Shiva, if it is your wish that my husband should desert me, why all this external beauty for me anymore? Grant me the form of a wraith.' Immediately, before everyone present, the young Punitavati got transformed into an abominable, ghostlike form. She left Nagapattinam and set out on foot to Mount Kailas, the holy abode of her Lord Shiva. When she neared the mountain, she did not wish to defile it with her feet. Legend has it that she traversed the last stretch on her head! Uma, Shiva's spouse exclaimed: 'O my Lord, amazing is the love of this bony frame which is approaching us, walking on its head!' Shiva replied: 'She is a mother who cherishes Us. And this glorious form she prayed for and obtained.' As Punitavati came closer, Shiva addressed her 'O Mother!' (Tamil, *'ammaiyē'*), and asked her what she wanted. She prayed only for undying blissful love for Him. She prayed not to be born again and, if born, to be granted His constant remembrance. She wanted to sing His praises and be vouchsafed a vision of His cosmic dance. Shiva granted her prayer and asked her to go to Tiruvallangadu (in Tamil Nadu), where she could witness His dance. She walked back to Tiruvallangadu and sang praises of the Lord through devotional hymns.

From then on she came to be known as Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār. She was an ideal wife and ideal devotee rolled into one. Love of God was her only means. Love of God was the only thing she craved for. Her unique life was an example of that divine love. She is revered as one of the sixty-three Shaiva saints of Tamil Nadu, called Nāyanmārs. \*

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# Avadhūta Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

## The great vow (*continued*)

यथा रविः सर्वरसान्भुङ्क्ते हुताशनश्चापि हि सर्वभक्षः ।

तथैव योगी विषयान्भुङ्क्ते न लिप्यते पुण्यपापैश्च शुद्धः ॥९॥

9. Just as the sun well absorbs all the [atmospheric] moisture, and the fire consumes all things [without in any way being affected by them], even so, the pure (unpolluted) *yogin* experiences all things, unstained by good or evil (virtues or sins).

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।

तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥१०॥

10. Just as waters [from all sides] flow into the ocean which is brimful (full to overflowing) and steady (stable), even so he [alone] attains peace, into whom all desires enter [and get dissolved without affecting him in the least]; not he who seeks the objects of desire.<sup>1</sup>

## Avadhūta's teaching concerning the Ultimate Truth

### परमार्थसदुपदेशः

न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिर्बद्धो न हि न साधकः ।

न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥११॥

11. There is neither dissolution (destruction, death), nor origination (beginning, birth); there is none bound, nor anyone who aspires [for spiritual realization]; there is no seeker after liberation, nor anyone liberated. This [indeed] is the Ultimate Truth.

ऐहिकामुष्मिकव्रातसिद्धयै मुक्तेश्च सिद्धये ।

बहुकृत्यं पुरा स्यान्मे तत्सर्वमधुना कृतम् ॥१२॥

12. The many activities done by me in the past, and the actions done [just] now, for achieving worldly gains—for gaining things here (that is, in this world) and hereafter (that is, in heaven etc)—as well as for attaining liberation, [have been done].

तदेव कृतकृत्यत्वं प्रतियोगिपुरःसरम् ।

दुःखिनोऽज्ञाः संसरन्तु कामं पुत्राद्यपेक्षया ॥१३॥

13. Those actions were performed while depending upon external objects (*pratiyogipurasaram*).<sup>2</sup> [Reflecting thus, he gains an insight that all his actions, past and present, are motivated and triggered by external dependence]. That [insight] verily [confers on him] a state of fulfillment. Investigating thus [into the truth of his actions], he remains ever content. Let the miserable, the ignorant, go round and round through this cycle of *saṁsāra* (transmigratory existence), on account of [their] desire for children etc.<sup>3</sup>



परमानन्दपूर्णोऽहं संसरामि किमिच्छया ।

अनुतिष्ठन्तु कर्माणि परलोकयियासवः ॥१४॥

14. By what desire shall I go through this *samsāra* [like the ignorant persons]—I, who am filled with supreme bliss [of Self-realization] (*paramānanda-pūrṇa*)?<sup>4</sup> Let those [ignorant persons] who yearn to go to the other worlds perform [various] rituals.

सर्वलोकात्मकः कस्मादनुतिष्ठामि किं कथम् ।

व्याचक्षतां ते शास्त्राणि वेदानध्यापयन्तु वा ॥१५॥

15. What [ritual] shall I perform—by what means, and why—I, who am the Self of all the worlds (*sarvalokātmakaḥ*)?<sup>5</sup> Let those [ignorant persons] who [think that they] are qualified, explain the scriptures or teach the Vedas.

येऽत्राधिकारिणो मे तु नाधिकारोऽक्रियत्वतः ।

निद्राभिक्षे स्नानशौचे नेच्छामि न करोमि च ॥१६॥

16. As for me, there is no such [endowment or] qualification, for I am gifted with actionlessness.<sup>6</sup> I have no desire to sleep, to eat (beg for alms), to bathe or to maintain [external] cleanliness; nor do I [feel inclined to] indulge in these activities.

द्रष्टारश्चेत्कल्पयन्तु किं मे स्यादन्यकल्पनात् ।

गुञ्जापुञ्जादि दह्येत नान्यारोपितवह्निना ।

नान्यारोपितसंसारधर्मानेवमहं भजे ॥१७॥

17. Let the onlookers imagine [whatever they want about my state]. What does others' imagination matter to me [who am pure and contented by my very nature]? Just as a bunch of red blackberries does not burn by the [imaginary] fire superimposed on it by others, I do not [in the least] partake of the worldly vocation superimposed [on me] by others.

(to be continued)

## Notes and References

1. Desires have no impact on a *jñānī's* mind, for they get dissolved there as rivers in an ocean.
2. Before the dawn of knowledge, there was dependence on external objects (*pratiyogins*). On attaining knowledge, the *avadhūta* has no need of anything external (*niṣpratiyogin*), for he has realized that he is one with Brahman, the One without a second.
3. Reference to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which speaks about three kinds of desires: for children (progeny), for wealth and for the worlds (*lokas*).
4. *Paramānanda-pūrṇa* could mean 'filled with supreme bliss' or 'of the nature of supreme bliss and infinite'.
5. 'Self of all the words' would mean that there cannot be any question of the *avadhūta's* going anywhere, for all space is in him, he being Brahman, the All-pervading and the Infinite.
6. Even the act of interpreting or teaching the Vedas presupposes an agent who acts. The *avadhūta*, freed from all relative attributes, cannot any longer superimpose any agentship on the Self. He therefore does not feel that *he* is acting.

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# Soar with the Swan

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

**C**oins of the British period are not the current medium of exchange. The metal of the old coins may be valuable but they are not the medium. The old ones have to be smelted and minted anew to make them valid for current use. Sri Ramakrishna has said that he is the current coin. He has also said that his endorsement is required to encash cheques now.

## Sri Ramakrishna's Uniqueness

The Western wave of materialism and atheism was sweeping over India, the land of the sages. Imperialism and its proselytism were sapping the vitality of the Eternal Religion. Macaulay hoped to convert India into a Christian colony. But no, that was not to be. The guarding angel of India provided the preventive measure immediately. Sri Ramakrishna was born soon after. And he was to be the saviour of India's hoary religious and spiritual tradition.

India's special role in the comity of nations is spiritual leadership of the world. From time immemorial spiritual teachers have appeared in India. An ancient rishi sang, 'I have seen that Supreme Person, resplendent like the Sun, shining beyond all darkness.' That was a voice from the remote past. Modern man is a skeptic. He would question the validity of antiquarian voices. Who knows what the voice said was not a poetical outpouring? Where is the proof? Well, here is the evidence. A modern agnostic approached the priest of Kali at Dakshineswar and asked him if he had seen God. The answer was straight and clear: 'Yes, I have seen God, as I see you, nay, even more clearly than I see you.' The questioner was impressed and convinced. He sought to be shown God. Sri Ramakrishna led Narendra

to God. The ancient message was proved true in unequivocal terms. Ramakrishna attested the validity of the Vedas. The revalidation of the Vedas is the prime purpose of a descent of the Divine. Swami Vivekananda designated him as a *dharmasthāpaka*: Vivifier of Virtue. Discovery of God is Ramakrishna's greatest gift to the world.

## Narendra's Transformation

Naren was a member of the Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj did not believe in a Personal God. They were opposed to image worship. Advaita was anathema to them. Naren subscribed to the Samaj's beliefs and practices. Yet he was an earnest seeker of God. The search took him to Ramakrishna, the priest of Kali at Dakshineswar. That was a meeting of the ancient India and the modern world. In the

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very first encounter, Naren got an assurance that God is real and can be realized. Ramakrishna's behaviour towards him made Narendra doubt his sanity. Narendra had to be disabused of his Brahmo preconceptions and divested of the suspicion of Ramakrishna's sanity. Poverty drove Naren to seek the priest's help. The priest sent him to Kali in the temple. By the guru's grace, Naren saw the living Kali

in the temple image. Naren saw God with form in the image. Two of his misconceptions were removed. God can have forms and worship of God in idols is not wrong.

Ramakrishna asked Narendra to read the *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā* to him. It is a treatise of ultra-monistic, iconoclastic Advaita. Naren ridiculed its proposition. He was talking to Hazra disparaging Advaita. Ramakrishna overheard him. He came out of his room and

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touched Narendra. And lo and behold, the world disappeared and he was engulfed in an infinite effulgent Presence. The experience continued for a few days. Naren could no more doubt the validity of the Advaitic experience.

Naren's Brahmo prejudices were removed. There now remained his suspicion of Ramakrishna's sanity. Naren considered him a monomaniac at the beginning. Later he said to Dr Mahendralal Sarkar and others that Ramakrishna was a being between the human and the Divine. During a birthday celebration at Dakshineswar, Girishchandra Ghosh requested Naren—then Swami Vivekananda—

to write a biography of their master. He said it was beyond his capacity. While installing an image of Sri Ramakrishna at the house of a devotee in Calcutta, he composed a verse of salutation wherein he said: '*avatāra varīṣṭhāya rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ*, prostration to you, Ramakrishna, the greatest of avatars.' Thus we see the evolution of Narendra's evaluation of his guru. Sri Ramakrishna made Narendra realize that he was the sanest of men. Narendra was shaped to become a fit vehicle for conveying to the whole world India's spiritual message in and through the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

### The Other 'Indra' Who Was Transformed

Narendra was the foremost of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. From among the lay disciples Ramakrishna chose someone to be his spokesman. He was Mahendranath Gupta. He was a well-educated, soft-spoken, sensitive young man. He had a poetic mind. He was a teacher by profession. He was married even while a student. Domestic problems made him disgusted with the world and he sought solution in suicide. One night he walked out of the house. His wife sensed something wrong and followed him. Hindered in his intention, he reached his sister's house at Dakshineswar. The next day, he reached the Kali temple of Rasmani along with his nephew. There in a corner room he saw a few people listening with rapt attention to a God-intoxicated man. The little that he heard attracted and impressed him. He wondered whether it was Sri Shuka instructing Parikshit or whether it was Sri Chaitanya at Puri inspiring his devotees. He went round the temple and came to the room again. By then the devotees had departed and the saint was alone. He met the saint, exchanged a few words and left. But he was captivated. Soon he visited him again.

One day he opened his heart to the Godman. 'This world is a horrible place. It is better to end one's life.' Sri Ramakrishna asked him

why he was speaking in that way. He said Mahendra had already got his guru and that guru's grace would make the impossible possible. Mahendra was reprieved and given refuge under his wings.

### *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*

Mahendra visited his guru whenever possible and used to keep in his diary a record of the visit and conversation. These diary notes of Mahendra are the source material for the wonderful book called *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. It is a unique book. It is photographic and sonorous, dramatic and poetic. Those who have visited Dakshineswar can see and hear—while reading the *Gospel*—Ramakrishna sitting on and speaking from his small cot. The setting is so graphic. No other saint has had such a faithful record of his daily doings and sayings. Verily it is a Veda for the modern man. Open any page of the *Gospel* and you will get the answer for any problem that is worrying you. Its message is universal, not sectarian in any manner.

### **Soar with the Two Wings**

Sri Ramakrishna is the authentic revelation of God for the modern man. He inspired two of his disciples to be his apostles. Both were 'Indras', one Narendra and the other Mahendra, one an ideal monk and the other an ideal householder. The word Narendra in Sanskrit means a king and also a physician, master of antidotes for snakebite. Verily Vivekananda was a prince among men and a physician to rid the venom of worldliness. He made the spiritual wealth of India, as revealed

The word Narendra in Sanskrit means a king and also a physician, master of antidotes for snakebite. Verily Vivekananda was a prince among men and a physician to rid the venom of worldliness. He made the spiritual wealth of India, as revealed in and through the life of his master, the common property of the world.

in and through the life of his master, the common property of the world. He also founded an order in the name of his guru to carry on the eternal heritage of India. Narendra, the skeptic, was transformed into Vivekananda.

Mahendra was cured of his suicide mania and made the Vyasa of the modern *Bhāgavata* that the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* is. These two Indras are the wings of the Paramahansa, the Great Swan. Swami Vivekananda has bequeathed the Vedantic legacy through his *Complete Works* and Mahendra has preserved for us the vision of the process of spiritual unfoldment. Swamiji gave the motto '*ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*, for one's own salvation and for the welfare of humanity at large'. The *Gospel* shows the way for *ātma-mokṣa*, and the *Complete Works*, the way to *jagat-hita*. Take shelter under these two wings of the Paramahansa and soar to the Supreme Soul with the Great Swan! \*

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You achieve greatness  
when you are oblivious of the dignity  
of those above you,  
and make those below you  
oblivious of yours.  
When you are neither haughty with the humble  
nor humble with the haughty.

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# I am the Indus

B N SIKDAR

## I

Aeons and aeons after my birth they christened me 'Indus'. At the time I appeared, the subcontinent called India (Greek 'Indos') after me did not exist. It was a vast tidal sea splashing, swelling, roaring, resounding. Billions and billions of years (as men would later reckon 'time') the sea thrust up continents which went on separating and closing in. Once upon a time the island-continent of India collided with what is the Tibetan plateau; the Himalaya consequently began to rise out of the foamy turbulence. It took seven hundred million years for the mighty range to become ultimately the top of the world. These geological contortions happened long, long before anything resembling bird or beast appeared. Only microbes clung to their precarious existence wherever they could.

Time flew. Eras passed. Snow fell and fell on the monarch of mountains. Glaciers crept down the rock. Rivulets coming down the peak they called Mount Kailas mingled and created me—a mighty outflow that no obstacle, natural or man-made, can thwart. I run about 320 kilometres across the very high range before cutting through the western Himalaya and the Karakoram. Indeed it is a heart-swelling panorama. Most places along my journey, the gorge is too narrow and has sheer sides. Continuous rapids barrelling down a steep staircase, I am so fierce in this lap of my journey that no adventurer, however tough and intrepid, would dare rafting. Then, as I reach the plains, I calm down only to churn noisily near the sea when the tide pushes me inland. Many revere me as a god, and indeed I am one: I have been lavish with gifts to bird, beast and man—over the eras.

## II

The first *Homo erectus* to reach my valley lived in caves, made crude tools and weapons of rock pieces, fought the reptiles, dinosaurs and the rest of them as well as they could. I still see vividly the first band of them arrive. Leading them slouched an ape-like being slightly stooping; his face was strong, massive and square, with thick teeth worn down from use as tools, from chewing fibrous roots for water. His nostrils flared; his dark forehead sloped sharply back to a peaked skull. Lithe, taut, thinned by hunger and arduous travel, he had led his dwindling family in a southeasterly course from the other side of the Karakoram range. Now, nose testing the air, ears cocked for sound, he watched his family band coming along behind him. They were constantly foraging for berries, grubs, small marsupials, digging for honey ants and edible roots. The leader waved the straggling band down. Last to arrive was an old man—tribal elder—with a stick, keeping the glowing end smouldering for cooking fire and holding enemy and cold at bay. They had already seen the utility of fire that fell from the heavens and burnt down forests scattering all living creatures. Therefore they never let fire die.

Long, long after these and other prehistorics, Cro-Magnons arrived, people to whom I was Sindhu ('river', simple). The other day, pursuing the Persians to the west of the Karakoram galloped Alexander of Macedon in search of new lands to conquer. He bathed his horses in my waters. Three years after he crossed, he threw over me a boat-bridge and vanquished Porus (Puru) on the Hydaspes (Jhelum), one of my tributaries. The sea I entered by many mouths, the Greeks called



Erichtheraum. From them the Romans learnt to call me Indos, which means 'river'. As the Persian tongue had no 's' sound, to it I became 'Hind'; and soon the people on the eastern shore were known as Hindus (from the region to the dwellers of the region; compare, Anglo + land = England).

Bifurcating Gandhara I came down and my placid stream acted as a pathway to commerce and nobler pursuits. Off my waters men struck a road from Central Asia to the interior of India. Caravans carrying merchandise plodded up and down. Taxila (in Rawalpindi, Pakistan) lay on this high road; it was great as a city of commerce, greater as a city of learning where crowded souls eager for knowledge and wisdom.

### III

Modern man in search of his roots has dug out my valley here and there. Mohenjo Daro ('Mound of the Dead') is one such place. Before its final destruction it was a city (or, several layers of city-like formations) whose inhabitants developed a distinct culture of their own. Their drainage, public bath-houses, municipal halls and other structures bespeak their civic sense and utilitarian outlook. They carved statues out of limestone, venerated the bull, carried commerce in boats up and down my stream, domesticated the buffalo, sheep, elephant, camel and dog. They were also the first to develop pictorial writing. (The earliest Indo-Aryan literature was transmitted orally.) They raised wheat, barley, palm date, and feasted on mutton, pork, fish and eggs.

The Harappan Civilization (2350-1770 BC) spread farther, though it was the former's legacy. Its remains lie scattered over half a million square kilometres; the earliest are extant in the Larkana district of Sind and Montgomery district of Punjab (Pakistan). There are the Public Bath, the Great Granary, well-executed roads and lanes and other civic amenities as at Mohenjo Daro; a dockyard to export cotton, wool, gold and silver. Then I acted (as now) as

a highway of trade, a life-sustaining artery.

To the Vedic tribes I was one of the seven sacred rivers (along with Ganga, Jamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada and Kaveri). The Sarasvati (*Rig Veda*, 'Nadi Stuti', 10.75.5) was as big as the Shatadru and actually met the ocean (ibid., 6.61.28; 7.95.2). Later on geological upheavals drove the grand stream (also Drishadvati, *Rig Veda*, 3.23.4) underground. Satellites have recently traced her course, thus confirming the Vedic references.

Civilization's pink dawn was first discerned in my valley in Euro-Asian continents. In the first phase it was but a grim struggle for survival. Slowly, very slowly, the ape-like being struck roots, traversed eras, ages, centuries. Always hopeful, he clung tenaciously to life and then commenced dreaming, soothsaying; was awed by what he took to be supernatural intervention—all by virtue of a stirring deep within himself. Aeons later one monk-poet fancied the spectacle and put it thus (Swami Vivekananda, 'Angels Unawares' in CW, 4.385):

*One bending low with load of life—  
That meant no joy, but suffering harsh and hard—  
.....  
Saw, one blessed night,  
                    a faint but beautiful ray of light  
Descend to him. He knew not what or wherefrom  
But called it God and worshipped.*

It must have been the work of his third eye.

### IV

Through eras I have been a witness to events—varied and colourful, both blood-curdling and exhilarating. There were the huge beasts, birds haunting primordial forests of hugely tall and spreading and thick-leaved trees; the sabre-toothed tiger, the furry elephants, the pterodactyls and the rest of them lurking, tearing, clawing out one another's entrails; serpentine plants infested with deadly insects, crabs, and the like.

I saw naked hunters hunt in groups; saw

the primitives burn or scoop out big trunks of trees; punting flat-bottomed boats, then appeared canoes and sea-going craft that hugged the sea-shore.

Eras later, riding horses in wave after wave, in band after band from north and northwest of the Karakoram range, a branch of white-skinned people (*devas*, 'shining ones') came. Sacking, pillaging, demolishing whatever settlements existed, they nearly obliterated the native culture. Their invasion continued with breaks for two or three millennia. In their turn as they spread south, south-east, they settled down and fought among themselves. After them the land between the Himalaya and the Vindhya came to be called Aryavarta ('Land of the Aryas'; see *Manu Samhita*, 2.22 and *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, 2.13).

The descendants of Dardic tribes inhabiting my valley to the west were such fierce warriors that to collect tribute for his *ashvamedha yajna* (horse sacrifice), Yudhishtira chose the master archer Arjuna for the task (see *Mahabharata*, 'Sabha Parva').

When the Indo-Aryans started lighting a thousand fires to make burnt-offerings in the dense forests of Himalayan foothills, rivers of blood and lard flowed out until another kind of ethical upheaval put a stop to the cruel rituals. History thrust up an embodiment of peace and compassion in the form of Gautama Buddha (563-483 BC). His teaching transformed an

emperor of prowess—one of the noblest known to the world. For centuries my valley reverberated with noises stone-cutters, wood-polishers made to set up stupas, rock-pillars, rock-edicts, monasteries and temples. They chanted hymns in a new sort of liturgy. The saffron-clad bards who pondered eternal verities and spun endless theories were finally silenced (the Vedanta).

Across me again, as ages rolled on, came the Hun hordes from the north, soon to undergo a sea change wrought by Buddha's ideas. The Mongols followed. The Turks, the Afghans also arrived like hungry wolves. Some returned with huge booties of gold, silver, slaves. Others stayed to conquer and reign, kill or convert. Today or this morning (as I reckon it) in my valleys east and west, north and south, men carrying fierce armour, firing huge, gigantic instruments of mass slaughter stained my pure white snow crimson. Proud of technology (which enables them to photograph me from hundreds of kilometres in the heavens) these merciless bipeds consider themselves in megalomania *Homo sapiens* ('wise men'). How vain! Despite the thin cloak worn or discarded in a moment they are very much the prehistoric *Homo erectus*. Or how could they forget that I am (as every river is) one of God's benedictions to nourish life and all that it means? And pollute me to suffocation? \*

## The Pearls

The guru was meditating on the river bank when a disciple bowed down to him and placed two enormous pearls at his feet, a token of reverence and devotion.

The guru opened his eyes, lifted one of the pearls and held it so carelessly that it slipped out of his hand and rolled down the bank into the river.

The horrified disciple plunged in after it but, though he dived in again and again till late evening, he had no luck.

Finally, all wet and exhausted, he roused the guru from his meditation: 'You saw where it fell. Show me the spot so I can get it back for you.'

The guru lifted the other pearl, threw it into the river and said, 'Right there!'

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# Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the Harmony of Religions

SWAMI SANDARSHANANANDA

Much has been said about secularism, especially in our national context. It has consequently lost its edge and eventually become a cliché. In common parlance, secularism appears to imply peaceful

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[Vivekananda] knows that man is obviously hamstrung by certain limitations handed down by his lineage. In order to emancipate him from its legacy he should be imbued with a liberal spirit bereft of indiscriminate proclivity towards a particular faith. So his vocabulary in this regard was scientifically chosen and impeccably set, reflecting perfectly the import of the purpose of uniting mankind with the same spiritual thought and pragmatism.

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coexistence of people of different religious faiths. But it does not indicate anything else otherwise by which one can see how to install peace practically in the midst of a welter of such diverse beliefs. That is perhaps its deficiency.

Ironically, there was never any sincere attempt at identifying this weakness, let alone finding out its remedy. It is the penury of a person's soul that turns him into a fundamentalist. Prompted by that parochial attitude, he loses sight of the perennial essence underlying

his avowed religion, which is also the common spiritual base of all other religions, and remains engrossed in its non-essential practices.

A firm conviction of this fact drew Sri Ramakrishna to practise almost all the major religions of the world with utmost devotion. After a comprehensive realization of their goals, he proclaimed the harmony of religions to humanity at large. He offered it as a prophylactic against communal as well as sectarian strife, which have possessed the earth for long.

In conclusion, Ramakrishna says:

God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true. ...

You may say that there are many errors and superstitions in another religion. I should reply: Suppose there are. Every religion has errors. Everyone thinks that his watch alone gives the correct time. It is enough to have yearning for God. It is enough to love him and feel attracted to Him.<sup>1</sup>

He clarifies his spiritual experience again:

It is like water, called in different languages by different names, such as 'jal', 'pani', and so forth. There are three or four ghats on a lake. The Hindus who drink water at one place, call it 'jal'. The Mussalmans at another place call it 'pani'. And the English [Christians] at a third place call it 'water'. All three denote one and the same thing, the difference being in the name only. In the same way, some address the Reality as 'Allah', some as 'God', some as 'Brahman', some as 'Kali', and others by such names as 'Rama', 'Jesus', 'Durga', 'Hari'.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of his Master's experience, Swami Vivekananda preached the principles of a universal religion which might be accept-

able to all and sundry. He made a real impression when he said at the beginning of his 'Raja Yoga':

Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.<sup>3</sup>

One wonders if anything more direct and transparent than this is possible to inspire man to rise above the tensions of colours and creeds. When Vivekananda utters these words he bears in mind the conflicting issues which separate man from man. He knows that man is obviously hamstrung by certain limitations handed down by his lineage. In order to emancipate him from its legacy he should be imbued with a liberal spirit bereft of indiscriminate proclivity towards a particular faith. So his vocabulary in this regard was scientifically chosen and impeccably set, reflecting perfectly the import of the purpose of uniting mankind with the same spiritual thought and pragmatism.

The nature of politics is capricious, with delusion as the inevitable consequence. Vivekananda therefore repeatedly urges that we keep politics in abeyance while doing good to society. It is politics which has made wrong use of religion and divided mankind into hostile communities. Although his disciple Sister Nivedita was goaded by her own notion to take to politics for national regeneration, she never thought that her Master had any inkling for politics. She says, 'He was no politician, he was the greatest of the nationalists.'

By nationalism Nivedita means a spiritual culture, of which her Master was the greatest exponent, which is again the bedrock of Indian civilization, from the bosom of which the rest of the world can draw nourishment for its survival in a milieu of love and

sympathy. To her 'he was at once a sublime expression of superconscious religion and one of the greatest patriots ever born'. She justified her affiliation to politics, despite the reservation shown by her Master, as a useful means to accomplish the task, the brunt of which was placed on her by him while dedicating her for the good of the masses. And this doing good, she understood, would remain a far cry unless the country was first given back her freedom from the shackles of British rule.

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda stood for truth. They were not hidebound to any superstition.

They absorbed positive ideas from all religions and nourished themselves with their vitality to grow into personalities of distinction, deserving conspicuous attention. They were genuine world citizens shorn of reservations inflicted by changing circumstances.

Vivekananda was proud to be an Indian, but not in any narrow sense. His affection for India was for her rich contribution to the realm of spirituality, the catholicity of her religion and for her wholehearted hospitality to 'the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth'.<sup>4</sup> He believed 'that every religion of the world owes its origin to the country between the Ganga and the Euphrates', that is, 'of Asiatic origin' (2.361).

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda stood for truth. They were not hidebound to any superstition. They absorbed positive ideas from all religions and nourished themselves with their vitality to grow into embodiments of Truth. They were genuine world citizens shorn of

reservations inflicted by changing circumstances. Their sense of brotherhood knew no bounds.

Richard Schiffman in his book *Sri Ramakrishna: A Prophet for the New Age* describes Ramakrishna as a 'sublime paradox'.<sup>5</sup> This seems to be one of the most appropriate portrayals of his character. Ramakrishna has shown many things in his life inexplicable to common sense. To read their meanings properly a Vivekananda was required. It was discernible to him alone that Ramakrishna's advent was for the establishment of that religion which does not remain oblivious of man's material needs, and seeks to maintain a balance between his four basic propensities, that is, a

[Vivekananda] tried to awake mankind to its true glory and spiritual identity, for he learnt from Sri Ramakrishna that it was the panacea for all prevailing maladies. The moment he knew that to serve humanity is to serve God, he realized that man was nothing but God Himself in disguise, and all exterior differences of names and forms dissolved from his vision.

life of well-adjusted values of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. It was during his apostolate that Vivekananda broadcast this idea of compatibility, calling for a fresh spiritual resurgence rooted in human fellowship. Its efficacy was subsequently perceptible when world thinkers in his next generation, such as Arnold Toynbee, being influenced by Sri Ramakrishna, said that 'His [Ramakrishna's] religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere.'<sup>6</sup> He did not stop

there. Later in the same piece of writing he said: 'The Emperor Ashoka's and the Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family—and in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.' (p. viii)

Toynbee mentions Ramakrishna in the same breath as Ashoka and Gandhi. This is a point worthy of note. While the former was out and out a spiritual person, the other two were political activists—one was a king and the other was a freedom fighter. There is no denying this dichotomy in affections among Ramakrishna and them. Still Ashoka and Gandhi were intrigued by moral and spiritual virtues. They tried to apply them to the spheres of their own activities. Both of them made non-violence the summum bonum of their ideologies. To do that Ashoka embraced Buddhism after receiving a rude shock from the bloody consequences of the Kalinga war, and Gandhi took resort to the *Bhagavadgita* and other principal scriptures of the Hindus. But the significant point in Toynbee's statement is 'testimony to the harmony of religions'. Here he conveys the fact that the harmony of religions propounded by Ramakrishna is not the result of any academic or theoretical exercise. Rather it is an affirmation of its physical assimilation in his own life. In other words, he demonstrated that each religion is a 'unique way of salvation' and 'all of them alike are indispensable to mankind' and 'each leads by a different route to the same goal of human endeavours' (p. vii).

Accordingly, Vivekananda in his first speech at the Parliament of Religions, following his Master's teachings, unequivocally declared: 'We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.'<sup>7</sup> These words spontaneously fell from his lips, since he appeared on the stage of the Parliament with a mission. And that mission was to



show light to the world. Its onus was laid on his shoulders by his Master, and he was committed to fulfil its purpose. He tried to awake mankind to its true glory and spiritual identity, for he learnt from Sri Ramakrishna that it was the panacea for all prevailing maladies. The moment he knew that to serve humanity is to serve God, he realized that man was nothing but God Himself in disguise, and all exterior differences of names and forms dissolved from his vision. He says that he worships the only God whom we ignorantly call man. He thought that his work would not be complete till man realized that he was one with God. With the consummation of harmonization thus achieved, mankind will 'grow into a single family' and man will feel that 'in helping others he helps himself', that 'in hurting others he hurts himself'.

Toynbee proved himself to be more than a simple historian. To save human civilization from imminent disaster, he was able to offer a solution, considering the problem in its right perspective. He could see definitely that Ramakrishna's harmony of religions was not contrived but constitutional.

From his very childhood the ardour of harmony was manifest in Ramakrishna's behaviour, which ripened into a wonderful resource in his adulthood, the wealth of which he could successfully pass on to his disciple. So Vivekananda spent his whole life to make mankind understand its important value and utility. He gave the mantra 'give and take' (5.356) and professed a composite human culture with a universal religion capable of mass appeal. Religion to him, therefore, was not bandying words on metaphysical intricacies. It was 'being and becoming'. In his opinion, 'religion lies in ... realization' (8.229).

Vivekananda was worried 'that though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion' (2.360). Simultaneously he was pleased that there was tremendous propitious

power available in all great religions of the world. The more the sects of these religions multiply, the more opportunity there is for people to get reformed by their innate goodness. The existence of only one faith will be catastrophic because perfect balance means destruction suppressing differentiation, since 'variety is the first principle of life' (2.382). So he asks us to be constructive first. 'Iconoclastic

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reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down, but build' (2.384). He exhorts us to recognize variation and teaches us to learn 'that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes' (2.383). Then he tells us to 'take man where he stands, and from there give him a lift' (2.384).

Vivekananda was quite confident of his teaching. He never advanced unnecessary arguments in putting forward his views regarding universal religion. He was sure that 'through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward, towards God; every vision of truth that man has, is a vision of Him and none else' (2.383). When he interprets religion in such simple language, all confusions vanish from man's heart and he gets a glimpse of the true meaning of his belief; he is able to

realize unity in the purpose of life. Man becomes all the more convinced of the immense possibilities of religion when he hears Vivekananda: 'What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action.' (2.387)

But the moot question is how to achieve that, especially when he says that 'to become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion' (2.388). His precept is typical in this matter. He does not take refuge in any religious creed, for credal jealousy eats into man's rationality and reduces him to a beast. Hence he comes out with the principle of union or yoga. 'To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between him-

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self and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is union of *all* existence' (2.388). Stating this he abrogates the preached exclusiveness of any religion and thereby its tyranny. He makes religion boundlessly broad to accommodate all faiths, notwithstanding the enormous diversity in their traditions. He ascertains 'renunciation and service' (5.228) as the motive power for dynamism and creativity in religion.

A synthetic and congenial religion of its kind is capable of drawing men closer to one another, infusing a sense of belonging to a single family which had happened with Vivekananda himself. Devoid of any reluctance he

could therefore announce: 'I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one' (2.374). Although he was a Hindu sannyasin he was nevertheless a perfect internationalist saturated with the universality he inherited from his Master. If Ramakrishna is the cause, Vivekananda is its effect, and cause and effect are essentially one. In an ecstatic mood when Vivekananda says that he is a voice without a form, he removes all doubt and makes a clean breast of the fact that he only airs the message of his Master. Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual tutelage prepared him specifically for the purpose of effecting a global unification with a common spiritual end. Both of them were personifications of the harmony of religions. We had better emulate their examples, throwing aside all varieties in order to attain our highest good. \*

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4. CW, 1.3.
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# Reviews



For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA  
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.

**Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali with Bhāsvatī.** Swami Hariharananda Aranya; trans. P N Mukerji; rev. Adinath Chatterjee. University of Calcutta, Kolkata. 2000. xxx + 736 pp. Rs 400.

Swami Hariharananda Aranya's name is inseparably associated with the yoga philosophy of Patañjali, as he is universally acknowledged as the most authentic and lucid exponent of the yoga aphorisms after the celebrated Vyāsa, the first and foremost commentator on the *Yoga Sūtras*. Ancient commentators like Vācaspati Miśra (author of *Tattva-vaiśārādī*), Bhoja (author of *Rājamārtāṇḍa*) and Vijñānabhikṣu (author of *Yoga Vārtika*) explained the yoga philosophy in the light of their understanding of the significance of the sūtras. Swami Hariharananda was probably the only one in the last century to have combined within him both the theory and practice of yoga philosophy, which he used in grasping the true import of the sūtras and revealing them in intellectual terms in his Bengali book *Pātañjala Yoga Darśana*. His explanations of the *Yoga Sūtras* are not only learned and illuminating, but also authentic, backed as they are by his rich spiritual experiences. He was a veritable embodiment of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga wisdom. It is not without reason that his present work is recognized as a classic on Pātañjala yoga by scholars in India and abroad, and also by people who are keen to know our ancient spiritual heritage.

The University of Calcutta published the *Pātañjala Yoga Darśana* in Bengali for the first time in 1934. It was hailed by readers as an epoch-making work. It was translated into Hindi and published in the 1950s.

In deference to the last wishes of the Swamiji, Sri P N Mukerji prepared an English version of this work, which was first published by the University of Calcutta in 1963. It was hailed by everyone as a very valuable publication in the field of yoga stud-

ies. In his faithful and distortion-free translation, Sri Mukerji took sufficient care to preserve the charm of the original Bengali version.

The present revised and enlarged edition by Sri Adinath Chatterjee has many additions and improvements. He has not only thoroughly revised Sri Mukerji's English translation but has also presented an English translation of the *Bhāsvatī*, Swami Hariharananda Aranya's commentary on *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*. This has considerably enhanced the value of this edition of the book. Like the earlier editions, this edition too has Sanskrit texts of the *Yoga Sūtras* and the *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*, and illuminating elucidations by the Swamiji.

Sri Chatterjee has also included seven illuminating essays by Swami Hariharananda Aranya on allied topics. Most of these Bengali essays by the Swamiji are published for the first time. Sri Chatterjee got all of them rendered into English by different scholars, himself doing some, and incorporated them into this enlarged edition. The English translation of the ancient texts, cited by Vyāsa in his commentary, is given in the appendix besides a glossary of technical terms, and two indices.

With excellent printing, get-up and the paper used, the present book will surely be appreciated by all those who are interested in grasping the spirit of the composite Sāṅkhya-Yoga thought.

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**The Philosophical Foundations of Hinduism.** A Ramamurty. D K Printworld, 'Srikunj', F 52 Bali Nagar, New Delhi 110 015. 2000. viii + 216 pp. Rs 360.

The book is the twelfth in the series 'Contemporary Researches in Hindu Philosophy and Religion'. An attempt has been made in the book to un-

derstand comprehensively the nature and meaning of Hinduism on the basis of the two traditions of *śruti* and *smṛti*. The uniqueness of the book is that most of its attempts to understand Hinduism are based exclusively on either of the traditions of *śruti* or *smṛti*. The author is very particular in defining Hinduism 'as the religion based or inspired by the traditions of *Śruti* and *Smṛti*' (p. 2). Thus the book presents a beautiful analysis of the two streams of thought depicting *śruti* as stable and *smṛti* as dynamic, both contributing significantly to the growth and development of Hinduism. The differences between the two traditions are clearly spelt out by the author. *Śruti* represents revealed knowledge and as such does not speak of rewards and punishments. However, from the point of view of religious practices and beliefs, Hinduism is largely based on and shaped by the *smṛti* tradition. The chapter on 'Two Traditions' presents a comprehensive analysis of the implications of the two streams of religious thought, and accepts them as two models or paradigms. Hinduism is treated as the confluence of these two major streams, which represent the two basic forms of religious life within the great tradition.

Hinduism has distinct views on the meaning of human life and its relationship with world. The author discusses this point in detail in the chapter on 'Hindu World-view'. He has taken great pains to show that what is called Hinduism is not based completely on either *śruti* or *smṛti*, but is the result of the various attempts and constant efforts to reconcile and integrate both the traditions so that philosophical understanding and religious life are well integrated and balanced. This understanding of Hinduism is taken as the basis for explaining the nature and meaning of religion. Accordingly, concepts like dharma, man, the Divine and destiny are analysed—a standing testimony to the scholarship of the author in this area of study. The book comes to a close before drawing a conclusion, but succeeds in presenting significant ideas vividly.

It is really not easy to do justice to the wealth of information and insightful findings of a book of this kind in a simple review. With a glossary, bibliography and an index for further study and references, this book is a significant contribution to already abundant literature on Hinduism.

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**Sanskrit Drama: Its Aesthetics and Production.** Dr V Raghavan. Smt Sarada Raghavan, Krishna Towers, 9/13 Sardar Patel Road, Chennai 600 013. 1993. 434 pp. Rs 285.

*Sanskrit Drama* by Dr V Raghavan is an invaluable collection of his critical papers and essays on the various aspects of Sanskrit theatre and drama. This book was released by the late Sri K R Srinivasa Iyengar on the occasion of V Raghavan's *shatabhishekam* celebrations. Dr Raghavan was not only the founder of Samskrita Ranga but also a renowned critic of Sanskrit drama, producer of Sanskrit plays on the radio and author of several Sanskrit plays. His *Anarkali* in ten acts received the Kalidas Puraskar from the Uttar Pradesh Government.

With such impressive scholastic attainments of the author, it is no wonder that the present book is a treasure trove of information on the less-publicised aspects of Sanskrit drama and its aesthetics. The book traces extensively the origin and development of Sanskrit drama. The twenty essays in this volume deal primarily with the varieties of Sanskrit drama, its aesthetics, and problems associated with its dramatic productions.

The object of drama according to Indian aesthetics is the evocation of *rasa*. *Rasa* is a transcendent state of awareness that leads to the realization of an inner state of spiritual harmony. Since the pursuit of all art is an aid (*sadhana*) to contemplation and absorption in the divine essence, *rasa* is associated with this inner state of enlightenment and bliss. An interesting factor is that there is no tragedy in Sanskrit drama in the Western sense of the term. The Indian attitude does not look upon life to be an end in itself; it is but a prelude to the soul's quest for perfection.

Dr Raghavan's analysis of the different forms of Indian dance-dramas which still maintain the basic features of ancient Sanskrit theatre and stage, is exhaustive and illuminating. These dance-dramas are the Kudiattam and Kathakali of Kerala, the Yakshagana of Karnataka and the Bhagavata Mela Nataka. Other papers deal with music in ancient Indian drama, theatre, architecture in ancient India, and notes on 'Dasarupaka, Bhana and Lasyangas', 'Uparupakas and Nrityaprabandhas' and 'Natyadharmi, Lokadharmi and Vrittis'.

The well-documented and well-researched es-

says in the book are presented in a style that is fluid, coherent and lucid. There is no literary jargon, and the simplicity of the presentation makes an indelible impact on the reader's imagination. This scholarly collection of essays is a precious tool for further research in this eminently challenging field of ancient Sanskrit drama. The book has an exhaustive bibliography and index.

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**The Vimalakirti Sutra.** *Burton Watson.* Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007. 1999. xiv + 168 pp. Rs 295.

*The Vimalakirti Sutra* is the first ever English translation by Burton Watson of the Chinese work by Kumarajiva. Burton Watson is Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the Columbia University, USA, and one of the celebrated translators of Chinese and Japanese works. The book is an important Mahayana scripture. The scripture has been translated into other languages also.

*The Vimalakirti Sutra* was originally written in Sanskrit probably during the 1st century AD, containing events that took place 400 years earlier, and based on an authentic work of Mahayana Buddhism. The composer of the work as well as the time and place of the composition are not known. The Sanskrit title of the text is called *Vimalakirti Nirdeśha Sutra*. Kumarajiva's Chinese version contains fourteen chapters. Though a religious work, it is marked by episodes not essentially serious by nature, but remarkable for their lucid style combined with a tinge of humour. This has appealed to commoners.

The events narrated are said to have taken place during Buddha's time. Vimalakirti was a wealthy townsman of Shakyamuni's time. He himself was a Bodhisattva in his previous existence. His name was Akshobhya then. He intended to be re-born at the time of Shakyamuni Buddha's incarnation to become an exponent of the laws of Buddha. Thus he became an expounder of the ideals of Mahayana Buddhism, and that, from a position of authority. Vimalakirti is the central figure in the episodes mentioned here. *The Vimalakirti Sutra* also

contains the early history of Buddhism and the doctrine of non-dualism of the Mahayana canon. It is a product of the early years of Mahayana movement. In spite of its ontological approach, it has found its way to common people who have no background of Buddhist ideology because of its structural conception and art of delineation. The sutras are very popular in Far East countries like China and Japan and also in some other Asian countries. The Bodhisattvas according to *Vimalakirti Sutra* are said to be limitless in number.

Burton Watson's translation is very good and will appeal to those who believe in the practice of Mahayana Buddhism. Its diction is artistic and full of literary fervour. The translation senses the spirit of the original very well and has every possibility of becoming a popular work amongst readers of Buddhist works.

The book contains a glossary containing definitions of names of important persons and places, as well as major Sanskrit terms and numerical categories. Our thanks to Motilal Banarsidass for bringing out such an important publication.

*Dr Ramdulal Bose*

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## Books Received

**Glimpses of Wisdom.** *Comp. Kalluri Suryanarayana.* Sankhyayana Vidya Parishat, 2-12-34 Annapoorna Colony, Uppal, Hyderabad 500 039. 2001. x + 93 pp. Rs 40.

**Pathways to God-realization.** *Prabhu. D C S Sastry,* 12/1 K C C Mitra Street, Belgharia, Calcutta 700 056. 1998. 124 pp. Price not mentioned.

**Bhagavadgītā Bibliography (Vol. 1).** *Comp. Suryakumari Dwarakadas; rev. Dr C S Sundaram.* Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, 84 Thiru Vi Ka Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. 2000. xviii + 99 pp. Rs 120.

**Acharya Shankara and His Philosophy.** *Ed. Dr Bijayananda Kar.* Adi Shankara Vedanta Pratishthanam, IVA-29/4, Unit II, Bhubaneswar 751 009. 2001. v + 61 pp. Price not mentioned.



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## ❧ Reports ❧

**Installed.** A marble image of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi in the Savitri Temple on Savitri Hill in Pushkar, Rajasthan, on 17 February (Sarasvati Puja day). Thanks to the initiative taken by Ramakrishna Mission, Jaipur, the image replaces the picture of Holy Mother which was being worshipped in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple since 1973. The spot was sanctified by Holy Mother's visit in 1897.

**Inaugurated.** The newly built Gita Bhavan at the Ramakrishna Shishu Vidyalaya, Khochna, a school run by Ramakrishna Mission, Dinajpur, Bangladesh; by Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 19 February.

**Inaugurated.** The newly built Brahmanandodayam Higher Secondary School building at Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, on 24 February.

**Conducted.** A workshop on 'Total Knee Replacement', by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow, on 24 February, in which 50 surgeons participated.

**Celebrated.** The platinum jubilee of Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, from 3 to 25 March. The celebrations were inaugurated by Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, who also released a souvenir and declared open a new building consisting of an auditorium and residential quarters for monks, staff and guests. The public meeting held on the 3rd was chaired by Swami Gahananandaji and addressed by Swami Smarananandaji and others. The

month-long celebration included a seminar on value education (4 March) and a meeting on inter-religious fellowship (5 March) in which senior monks of the Ramakrishna Order and other distinguished people actively participated. On the 17th, as part of Narayana Seva, food and clothes were distributed to a large number of poor people in two localities of Delhi. Sri Jagmohan, Minister for Culture and Tourism, Government of India, presided over the youth rally held on the 25th at Shyamal Das Seth's guest house on Roshanara Road, where Swami Vivekananda stayed in 1891.

**Visited.** Mr F W Momin, Minister for Education, Government of Meghalaya; Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji, on 7 March. He presided over the annual prize distribution ceremony of the Ashrama's higher secondary school.

**Organized.** A free medical camp by Ramakrishna Math, Puri, at Jodalinga Shiva Temple on Shivaratri (12-13 March). 150 patients were treated.

**Visited.** Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, and the High Commissioners of India and Sri Lanka to Bangladesh; Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka. They participated in the centre's week-long annual function from 16 to 22 March.

**Visited.** Janab Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Minister for Textiles, and Prof Rezaul Karim, Minister of State for Industries, Government of Bangladesh; Ramakrishna Ashrama and Ramakrishna Mission, Narayanganj, Bangla-

desh. They took part in the centre's 4-day-long annual function from 26 to 29 March.

**Visited.** Dr F A Khonglam, Meghalaya chief minister; Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji, on 30 March. He presided over the annual prize distribution ceremony of the centre's lower primary and ME schools.

**Conducted.** 6 free eye camps by our centres in Madurai, Patna, Porbandar, Puri, Ulsoor and Visakhapatnam. 627 persons were operated on and 436 outpatients were treated in these camps.

**Secured.** The following ranks by the students of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai, in the Bachelor's degree examinations held by the University of Madras: 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th in Philosophy; 1st, 2nd and 3rd in Sanskrit; 1st in Physics. In the Master's degree examinations, students of the Vidyapith came 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th in Phi-

losophy; 1st and 2nd in Sanskrit; and 2nd in Chemistry.

**Placed.** 1st at the state level and 3rd at the national level, at the First National Cyber Olympiad conducted by the Science Olympiad Foundation; a student of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar.

### **Gujarat Earthquake Rehabilitation Project**

**Inaugurated.** 8 newly built school buildings in Gujarat (7 in Surendranagar district and 1 in Porbandar district) between 19 and 31 March.

**Handed over.** 240 houses (of the 332 taken up) and 43 schools (of the 76 taken up) to the concerned authorities. Besides this, 42 houses and 4 schools have been completed, and 12 school buildings are at various stages of construction.

## **One Tick at a Time**

The clock master was about to fix the pendulum of a clock, when, to his surprise, he heard the pendulum speak. 'Please, sir, leave me alone,' the pendulum pleaded. 'It will be an act of kindness on your part. Think of the number of times I will have to tick day and night. So many times each minute, sixty minutes an hour, twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. For year upon year ... millions of ticks. I can never do it.' But the clock master answered wisely, 'Don't think of the future. Just do one tick at a time and you will enjoy every tick for the rest of your life.'

And that is exactly what the pendulum decided to do. It is still ticking merrily away.

## **Revelation!**

A guru promised a scholar a revelation of greater consequence than anything contained in the scriptures. When the scholar eagerly asked for it, the guru said, 'Go out into the rain and raise your head and arms heavenward. That will bring you the first revelation.' The next day the scholar came to report: 'I followed your advice and water flowed down my neck—and I felt like a perfect fool.' 'Well,' said the guru, 'for the first day that's quite a revelation, isn't it?'